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THE SPACE GAMER

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THE SPACE GAMER

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WHERE WE'RE GOING

What will simulation gaming be like five years from now? When you look back at how far gaming's come since 1970 the off-the-cuff answer has to be — it will be different. Simulation gaming is coming into its own. The basis for the next stage of evolution is laid, and rapid change will come.

I'll stick my neck out and make a few predictions for what will have happened in the next five years. All these things are possible. I'd guess the odds are that six of these seven predictions will occur. Frankly, they are a bit conservative.

1. By 1983 an existing game company will be over the $10,000,000 annual sales mark in simulation products.

2. By 1983 there will be a national gaming tournament with over $10,000 in cash prizes.

3. By 1983 there will be at least two established "family game" firms committed to wargaming.

4. Computerized simulation games will be very popular by 1983. However, hobbyists will rip-off illegal cassette, diskette and PROM copies of game programs so extensively that larger firms will eventually get out of the market altogether.

5. By 1983 at least two-thirds of the existing military miniature and simulation game firms will be defunct, moribund or bought out.

6. By 1983 the World Science Fiction Convention will be awarding the Hugo for best SF&F game.

7. By 1983 SPI, Avalon Hill, Minifigs, Heritage, TSR and Metagaming will be the dominant companies.

These predictions may appear to be a mixture of fantasies. They will probably come true. The simulation gaming industry is still very new with a lot of drive and chutzpah. Despite the stodgy reputation of a few of the bigger firms, they are very innovative by business standards. Look for a lot of action and ideas in the next few years.

The first prediction is actually a give-away. I'll be surprised if three or four companies aren't past the ten million mark in five years. SPI should lead the pack. All firms have their ups and downs. SPI will come out of its current doldrums lean, hungry, and on the move.

Cash prize tournaments are coming. Someone is going to sit down with a stack of chess clocks and simpler games and devise a competitive gaming system that works. It may even be that tournaments will surpass conventions as the premier wargaming event.

Predicting that the family game firms will eventually come into wargaming is another giveaway. Milton Bradley actually thinks it *is* in the wargaming market now with **BROADSIDE** and other titles. Wargamers wouldn't agree. Very soon now, the family game firms will realize that wargaming doesn't have to have the market volume of **MONOPOLY** to have equivalent profits.

Computerized simulation games will come on strong in a few years. Hobbyists will destroy the market for these games with illegal rip-off copies. Metagaming won't be one of those selling game programs on cassettes, diskettes or PROMs. We will work very hard to prohibit unauthorized programming adaptations of our games. This policy will make us unpopular with hobbyists used to rip-offs, but we *will* protect our games.

Predicting the effective demise of two-thirds of our industry may be surprising to some. A shake out of firms will occur within the next eighteen months. Breaking into the market will also be harder. Stores have only so much space they can devote to wargaming products and still make a profit. That means there will be some limit on the number of company lines they can handle. Marginal lines will eventually be confined to the wargaming specialty shops that handle everything. There are so many firms making boxed games of fair quality now that breaking into board wargaming will be very difficult. Miniatures competition isn't far behind in packaging and display, and that will exclude less professional efforts. Many small efforts will survive with limited mail sales and store distribution of poorly packaged products. They will not make money and last only so long as they are willing to run a business as a hobby.

There will be a Hugo for SF&F games. This will be proceeded by a lot of blood letting and acrimony among SF fans. Fandom as now constituted doesn't like to think of anything but books, T. V./film, and magazines as science fiction. That view isn't shared by the younger, more numerous crop of fans that is growing up accustomed to reading SF and playing games on an equal footing. Microgames and book tie-in games will eventually carry the day for a game Hugo.

Your personal list of favorite companies that will dominate wargaming in five years may differ considerably from mine. My list includes all those firms that can become dominant if they keep their act together. Any of those firms could fail to adapt and be, or remain, a minor influence. There is a possibility that one or two other firms might make the list, but they'd have to be considered dark horses.

Firms currently larger than Metagaming will no doubt get a good laugh out of my putting our name in with theirs. They no doubt still laugh at Microgames. Metagaming can surely flop on its own and not make it. Laughter won't hurt at all. And, how come SPI never did rate any Microgames after **OGRE**?

. . . Howard Thompson

LAYIN' IT ON THE LINE

by
Edward C. Cooper

War in **WarpWar** is an art. It begins to form around forces whipping from system to system . . . narrows to focus a nexus of running battles as players try to outmaneuver each other and bring more strength to bare in the fray.

The open end ship design format, along with the diceless combat system synthesize a new dimension in strategy — constant adaptation and design innovation during play. As opposed to the usual methods of having to build a strategy around a *given* design of ship, in **WarpWar**, a ship can be built to *fit* a strategy. The player with the most sheer ingenuity ranks the definite advantage.

WarpWar is not a game a player can sit down and before playing, analyze the path to winning. (I'm sure many are aware of the great degree to which this is possible with a number of wargames.) In fact, in **WarpWar**, gameplay is anything *but* predictable.

Are your base stars going to be attacked on turn *two*, will the enemy try and foul up the Lines first . . . and if so . . . the agonizing question then becomes — *WITH WHAT?*

The spectrum of combat permitted is complex and fascinating. The advantage, not unexpectedly, lies with the aggressor. A player does not have the forces to protect all the important geographic advantages gained should a defensive option be taken. Essentially, the attacker can **control** the tide of the game through the type and location of attacks made.

It is here analysis becomes increasingly difficult. I feel it the point of any strategy article on **WarpWar** to show the small advantages to be gained here and there, hoping enough will add up to the closest thing possible for a successful stratagem.

The Warpships pose a complex problem to each player. Properly armed, they can be an awesome weapon of destruction. Especially when one considers their mobility. Yet by their primary design function, transportation link between systems, the *mortal wound* their loss can inflict makes their heavy use for combat exceedingly dangerous. Consider too, to arm a Warpship properly is expensive. Defensive weapon systems **must** be installed to protect any investment of sophisticated machinery put aboard (systemship racks, Systemships and their weapon systems).

Add to this large offensive system, and a few extra BPs must be spent for *added defense*. Or, to use an old cliche, a player is talking many eggs in one basket.

This is not to say there should be a noted lack of offensive Warpships. On the contrary, some are needed to keep an opponent in fear of imminent attack at all points on the gameboard.

If there is a key to success in **WarpWar** however, it lies inconspicuously hidden within the realm of the Systemship. A Warpship has several weaknesses the Systemship does not have, but not vice-versa.

The only functional advantage the Warpship has over a Systemship is the ability to move from star to star on its own, though it is important to point out this is seldom good practice. Mention might be made that a Warpship can retreat. True. But, retreat is made a positively rotten option by the rules, (thus questioning it as an advantage), depending on situation. Retreat is only recommended if an engagement is being temporarily discontinued while awaiting reinforcements, or the retreating player has another heavily fortified star system nearby.

Under the retreat option, escaping ships may be moved to an adjacent space hex. According to the rules, Warpline movement is restricted to a ship moving onto a star at the end of a line and initiating it. Warpline movement may not be started at any space in-between.

An opponent, knowing this, can be counted on to make life difficult by covering as many of the systems in the immediate area as is possible. If you've retreated, in the first place you've usually eaten it pretty badly in combat and don't have one of the highest PDs left. The time to travel to an open star at snail's pace isn't a pleasant thought.

One of the weaknesses of a Warpship is that in missile combat, screens must be lowered in order to fire. For a Warpship, lowering screens implies the added risk of losing any cargo aboard, plus the extra BPs spent on the warp generator. A systemship, usually consisting of one tube with power, and three to six missiles, has no such risk involved with its use. A Warpship firing missiles under sustained combat conditions against Systemships will cease to exist if it sticks around long.

There is however, a *very* interesting tactic the Warpship can yet employ. Ever heard of the tactic of retreat? The most attractive part of the idea is that even as it is explained here and *given away*, it can still be used because a player won't know it's being used until after the fact.

As was mentioned before, Warpships can choose the retreat option during combat. Using a missile version Warpship — several tubes with missiles and an adequate supply of power — a player seeks out and initiates combat.

Look at the Combat Table. The advantages of multiple missile fire with drives set at different levels is obvious. What may not be so apparent is that by choosing the retreat option, the Warpship can only be hit on a +3, +4 drive difference — considerably lessening the risk of having dropped screens. If any attacking ship chooses the dodge tactic, there is *no chance* the Warpship can be hit by the ship's weapons.

The Warpship thus fires its missiles at the predesignated targets, and selects the retreat combat option — TURN AFTER TURN.

If the Warpship escapes to an adjacent hex, it moves right back into the star hex to initiate combat again on the next turn. If it fails to escape, so much the better. Another combat round is initiated, and the process repeated. Should the ship run out of missiles before the system has capitulated, run up the screens, (screens should be aboard, even with the Warpship's primary design as a missiles ship, to use in hit reduction) retreat, and high tail it for home for resupply.

Normally, the tactic means only one combat round per turn, but this option cuts down a Warpship's susceptibility to missile attack in a slugfest to a point where sustained combat is feasible — and not suicidal.

The three or four missiles fired by the Warpship will surely take out a few of the missile-carrying systemships, perhaps sustain damage to others.

The drawback to the Retreat tactic is that it takes time to execute. The plan is thus strategic in scope; so be careful *not* to build a gameplan around its use, but rather use it for variety in conjunction with some other gameplan. In this way, the tactic's results will be most pleasant indeed.

With the above in mind, the bulk of

a player's missiles should still be placed in Systemships. A greater number of Systemships can be built **combat effective**, than Warpships under BP considerations. The greater number of systemships means better missile distribution and more defensive disbursement. This means there are more targets the enemy must fire at — making overkill greater on any one target and overall reduction less.

A simple example would be 2 Systemships (SS) vs 1 Warpship (WS). The two SS have two missile tubes each. The WS has a total of four tubes.

The WS has to divide its fire among two targets. Chances are a sure kill will be tried for by uneven fire distribution among the targets. Greater overkill, but less reduction because a ship is still left. The SS on the other hand have all four missiles trained on one target. Chances are any hits will be fully absorbed with a minimum of overkill. *Hits* won't be wasted.

There is also another glaring advantage which players will find tends to increase the use of missiles in the latter parts of the game. *Technology adds.*

Example: A Warpship of technology one with a beam of four. Total cost is 5 + 4 + 4 = 13 BPs. This takes into account the warp generator, beam strength and a minimum power drive. For 13 BPs, three one tube-one PD-three missile SS can be built plus one, one tube-two PD-three missile SS. Roughly speaking, four systemships for the same price. Technology is the same.

The beam has one chance of hitting at 4 hit power, plus one for technology or 5 total hit points. Four missiles have four chances to strike at 1x2 + 1, or three hit power. Total is 4 times 3 or 12 hit points. Here again, the effects of greater distribution can be seen.

Sure, the missiles are expended whereas the beam weapon can be fired turn after turn. But, the issue should be questioned whether the longevity of a beam weapon will have time to enter as a factor in combat 1) with four missiles targeted on it for a couple of fire rounds, lessening after that due to losses, but still coming . . . and 2) because when the missile racks are empty, a ship will try to withdraw.

Chances are with such missile numbers against it, the Warpship will be hit, forcing some kind of reduction in effectiveness through attrition. Missiles do use up BPs. But, destroying a ship *uses up* a beam, too.

Perhaps it is just a coincidence, but players might want to look at page 16 of the rules booklet again, and that of all the combat examples possible, a multitube Systemship is shown mauling a Warpship.

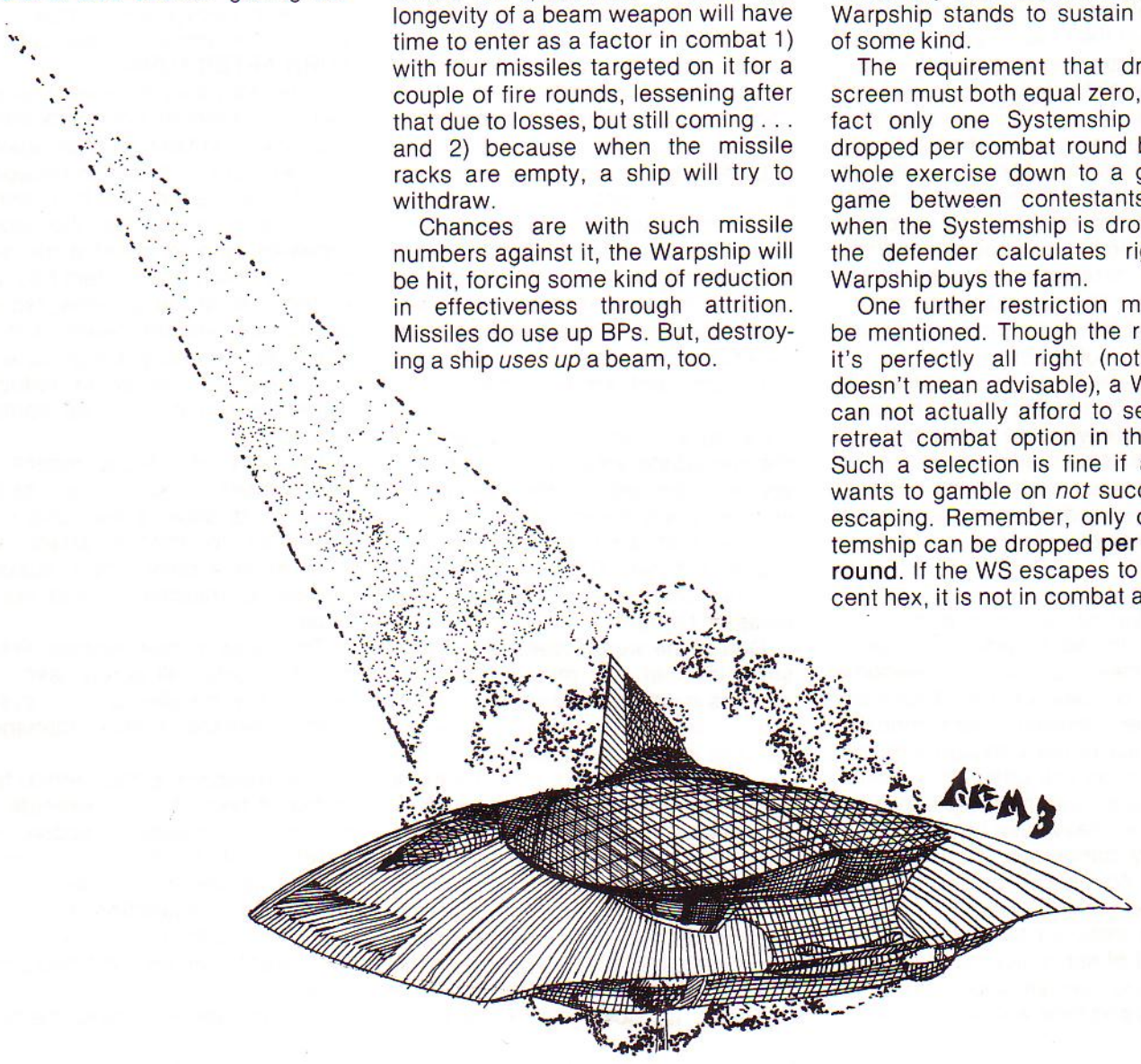
Systemships also have an advantage related to their use with systemship racks. As **WarpWar** is not a limited intelligence wargame — the counters are placed face up — a player might find systemship racks a good investment. Neither the composition nor number of Systemships is known when *riding* a Warpship. Suggest anything to you?

Again, using the rules as a reference, it is possible to show how all the *natural* elements of strategy work with the Systemship as the workhorse, and the Warper as the delivery system.

The drop-and-pickup of Systemships might seem to refute that last paragraph. Any player who's tried to drop/pickup during combat knows how sticky the situation can get. The Warpship stands to sustain damage of some kind.

The requirement that drive and screen must both equal zero, plus the fact only one Systemship can be dropped per combat round boils the whole exercise down to a guessing game between contestants as to when the Systemship is dropping. If the defender calculates right, the Warpship buys the farm.

One further restriction must also be mentioned. Though the rules say it's perfectly all right (notice that doesn't mean advisable), a Warpship can not actually afford to select the retreat combat option in this case. Such a selection is fine if a player wants to gamble on *not* successfully escaping. Remember, only one Systemship can be dropped **per combat round**. If the WS escapes to an adjacent hex, it is not in combat any more



and a second systemship cannot be dropped. Doubt should be cast on whether one *ordinary* systemship would last long.

Notice the word ordinary. Thought might be given here to some kind of **Monster Systemship** which, after down, could carry the attack aggressively to the enemy, giving the mother Warpship time to successfully *set up* the defender for another drop.

Another idea calls for a Scout WS, consisting mostly of screens, to pop in and investigate how *hard* a target is. The system's owner will not know the WS is not planning on sticking around. More importantly, the defender will never be able to tell this until *after* a combat round. Chances are the Scout will have quite a few things thrown its way. When the defender fires however, weapons used must be revealed, tech level might slip out, and must if a hit is sustained. Won't someone be surprised when the *real* attack comes, afterwards.

Care should be taken in hitting the Hard Systems. Drop/Pickup risk is high. Such targets usually require the armed Warpship, readily envisioned as like a battleship, invincible — but far and few in between.

A formula *this* player has found effective in softening the Hard Target is to approach the problem indirectly. Maybe it is not an interesting observation, but **WarpWar** is very much a game of finesse.

Line Cutting refers to the technique of a Mothership dropping her covey of Systemships behind the enemy front on an open star hex close to the target star and still on a Warpline. This maneuver achieves three things: 1) Systemship drop/pickup is easy to accomplish on an open star hex, 2) it breaks a continuous Line from the enemy's Base Stars to the War Front and 3) your position becomes a burr that hurts too much to be ignored.

In this star system, *your* forces are the ones who are firmly rooted in and must be dug out. Your opponent is almost forced to try and destroy the position or put more forces onto the defensive around the Base Star area. The effects of a defensive posture have already been discussed.

In attempting to destroy your position, the temptation to use forces from the Hard star is usually too great to resist. The majority of the time however, a player will use the Hard Star forces simply because *they are physically the closest to move!*

It is here the little bit of finesse is seen. Psychology? Why not? Believe me, it works.

The Hard Star is now hit with the forces set in readiness before the diversion was created. Often, an opponent will get forces *caught* between both stars and have to retreat, leaving you in possession of both stars. Don't smile too long though, in **WarpWar**, you can count that the enemy will return.

There is one major drawback to play in **WarpWar**. It revolves around the Technology Rule for combat. The idea itself was excellent, but it contains a passage which states: *All ships retain their original technological levels*.

One can appreciate why this comment was included for the sake of the existing game. Yet, it must be pointed out, the rule is a drastic break in the logic on which the rest of the game is built. Not only does it lack logic, it conflicts with the whole idea of Repair and Resupply — a crucial part of the game.

A ship is built and ventures out to war. Decades will pass before it finally limps home again, if indeed it survives at all. The game tries to simulate a long period of time by the inclusion of increasing tech levels.

It doesn't follow the same logic to assume that with new and more sophisticated weapons now available at the ship's return, the society is going to repair and resupply it with outdated weapons to go out again and fight ships of the future. And, I sincerely doubt intelligence services will be reliable enough, over such vast distances, to direct the ship to a target it can handle with any chance of success. Even allowing for the near impossible, one must remember the intelligence report itself will be years old by the time it gets back to Home Port. It seems logical to assume after a period of years such a replacement would be scheduled for sometime.

Such a course of action would be risky at best. Considering the tremendous economic strain interstellar war must put on a society, it is hard to picture military men okaying such an investment.

It seems much more feasible that planners, having realized this would be a war like no other, fought over centuries and not merely years, would have included in the standard ship design some flexibility for modification. Again it is hard to picture these planners not taking into account the obvious fact technology is bound to increase, and increase quickly in such an environment.

In fact, as the rate of Research and Development moves up during wartime — and future wartime in this case — with a ship returning 20-50-100 years objective time in the future, it is a good possibility there will not be any *old* weapons available!

Clearly, there should be some process for upgrading a ship's technological level. Chances are, ships will not last long enough in combat for many to do this, but provision should be made for the few that do.

The problem one then runs into is that the economics of the game are too simple to set up such a system very convincingly. It should certainly cost less to upgrade an existing ship than lay an entire new hull from ground up. Yet paying only — say, 3BP (2/3rds of the original WS cost) to upgrade the ship seems too little for such an increase in effectiveness.

The only way out of this dilemma is to suggest with mass production it *is* cheaper to build from scratch. This idea certainly has some merit, but can you imagine the waste this suggests there will be? Use a multibillion dollar ship once and then discard it? Even scrapping it would only recover a fraction of the cost. What about inflation? What about the cost increase for bigger and better ships? It's hard to find an ending point.

WarpWar would lend itself well to the larger game type format with more detailed economic-production inter-relationships and their possible effects on combat.

Yet, **WarpWar** is a great game for what it *succeeds* in doing. The skill level is extremely high. A good player must usher up every last ounce of intelligence possessed to figure out what ingenious monster an opponent will throw into battle next. And perhaps more agonizingly, where the blow will come . . .

CLASSICS SIMULATED

by
Glenn L. Williams

Fantasy has always been an important part of man's culture and literature — from Homer's epics, through the British scops, to our contemporary sword and sorcery authors. These great fantasies almost always have as a central theme some form of personal combat, whether physical, magical or both. With the microgames **MELEE** and **WIZARD**, these battles of literary fantasy can be recreated. I have chosen three epics: **BEOWULF**, with its three battles; the **ILIAD**'s final duel between Achilles and Hector; and the **ODYSSEY**, in a solotaire version of the cave fight between Odysseus and the cyclops, Polyphemos.

I. THE TRIALS OF BEOWULF *(OR BEAT THE GEAT)*

BEOWULF, the earliest English epic, concerns the career of a singular, boastful Geat warrior who becomes a king. His career was marked by three great personal battles, recreated below. There was little magic or divine intervention in these battles, which, although they have an aura of the supernatural, were solely on a physical level.

The first battle (with the giant monster Grendel) took place at night in a mead hall in Denmark. Grendel's nightly raids had devastated the kingdom for twelve years, and Beowulf, an outsider from southern Sweden, vowed to destroy the monster. The action took place between Grendel and Beowulf at night amid the corpses of the hero's slaughtered friends. The **Melee** board serves well as the mead hall, Herot. The entrance hexes are the doorways. Select twelve warrior counters, one will be Beowulf, the rest his friends. Randomly place them face down around the edge of the **Melee** board. All figures are lying down, all are unarmed and unarmored, and all but Beowulf are asleep. The ST and DX of the warriors are 12, IQ 8. Beowulf is ST 14, DX 14, and IQ 12. For Grendel use the **WIZARD** giant counter (not the cyclops, we'll use him later). For our purposes Grendel is simply an unarmed giant with the characteristics from **WIZARD**: ST 30, DX 9, IQ 8, and MA 10.

Grendel enters through any doorway hex. He may attack one sleeping Geat per turn, doing triple damage (remember, all hexes are rear hexes, so his adjDX is 13). On each turn beginning with the first, roll a six-sided die. On a one, the Geats awaken. On the second turn, roll again, the Geats awaken on a one or two, and so on until the fifth turn when they will automatically awaken. When the Geats are awakened, roll against IQ for each. Failure to make the roll means the individual warrior panics and flees through the nearest door. Since Beowulf is not asleep, he does not panic. A warrior who has fled will not return.

When Grendel attacks Beowulf, he automatically misses and the hero automatically strikes at triple damage. Essentially this scenario is an ambush, and the monster was not expecting the sudden twist his wrist took when the hero grabbed him. From that point, combat is hand to hand, and on all ensuing turns the monster fights at DX 7 as he is literally scared of dying. For each time Beowulf inflicts four or more points damage, roll a six-sided die: on a one or two the hero has ripped the monster's good right arm from its socket and the poor beastie is a permanent southpaw. Once Grendel has lost his arm, he must attempt to disengage and flee every turn. The monster is extraordinarily strong against an unarmed, unarmored opponent, therefore, Beowulf needs the advantages given. After playing this scenario a few times see how calmly *you* go to sleep. Think back to your childhood, maybe there was a good reason to be afraid of the dark!

Beowulf's other two battles are treated similarly. The second battle took place in a hall sunken below the surface of a lake. Use the **Melee** board. The fight was the day after the first battle against Grendel's vengeful mother, the hag (ST 13, DX 13, MA 10). She has a stone flesh spell for the duration of the game. Her hands are claws and are the equivalent of daggers. Beowulf has the same characteristics as before, but is armed with a broadsword and equipped with chainmail. The first hit on the hag with an ordinary weapon shatters it, and reduces the damage inflicted by half. On one side of the hall, near the center, are three swords hanging on the wall. Two are ordinary, one is magical and completely nullifies the stone flesh and shatter-weapon protection spells of the hag. Beowulf may not attempt to get a new weapon until his old weapon breaks. The two combatants begin in an entrance hex in hand to hand combat!

If you have an unnatural desire to kill heroes, the hag had some attendant monsters who help drag Beowulf into the hall. Add two small monsters (from the **MELEE** countermix): ST 6, DX 12, MA 6, hands do ½ die damage in hand-to-hand combat only. In this case begin as before, except that Beowulf is engaged by the two monsters. Place the hag in the center of the board. Since these are monsters with sharp claws, treat Beowulf's chainmail as if it were a creature with its own ST of 15. Each hit the armor absorbs reduces its ST by 1, thus the little fellows can't get at Beowulf, but they can rip his bright mail to shreds. The hag cannot engage Beowulf until the monsters have disengaged him or have died (their battle rage is such that they cannot distinguish friend from foe).

The final battle was between Beowulf as an aged king and a small dragon which had infested his kingdom. Beowulf's ST and DX are reduced to 13, and he is equipped with chainmail, a large shield, a broadsword and dagger. He sought the dragon in the company of twelve of his warriors, all of whom save one, deserted immediately. The one warrior who stood by his ring-giving lord was a kinsman, Wiglaf, whose char-

acteristics and equipment are the same as Beowulf's. In the epic, he vacillated before joining the battle, so he may only enter on a roll of one or two. If Beowulf is killed, Wiglaf will attempt to avenge his death and attack that turn. Use the **WIZARD** board. The dragon and the warriors enter from opposing sides (the battle was fought at the base of the dragon's tower, so his entrance hexes represent the doorway). The object is to slay the dragon, even if all the warriors die or flee. In the epic, the dragon was defending his treasure hoard and will not attempt to fly. If you still have some maudlin regard for the old hero, allow him to enter in the company of Wiglaf and his other warriors. The eleven are ordinary warriors, ST 12, DX 12, IQ 8, and equipped exactly as the king. Each turn they must roll against IQ to see if they panic and flee. The dragon will probably kill Beowulf and all who oppose him, so play this scenario from both sides and compare results.

II. ARISTEIA, HOMERIC CHALLENGE-COMBAT

The concept of gaining personal glory through personal combat (aristeia) was certainly present in **BEOWULF**, but it is more explicit in Homer's epic, the **ILIAD**. If you have not read this fantasy classic, it opens in the last years of the seige of Troy with a quarrel between the Greek's leader, Agamemnon, and their superlative warrior, Achilles. The hero withdrew to his tent to sulk, knowing that without his strength and the terror he inspired, the Greeks would panic and be slaughtered when they faced the Trojan's greatest warrior, Hector. Only when Hector killed Achilles' best friend, Patroklos (who was impersonating the sulking Achilles), did the great warrior re-enter the battle. Unfortunately, Hector had stripped Achilles' armor from Patroklos' corpse as battle spoils, leaving Achilles without armor. His divine mother convinced Hephastos, the gods' smithy, to forge brilliant and glorious new armor in which Achilles strode forth to meet the towering Trojan hero. The duel ended surprisingly quickly once the two came face to face, and the Greek killed the Trojan. Hector's death left the Trojans without a mighty warrior to lead and inspired them, and the disspirited city eventually fell. The end of the city and the wooden horse are not part of this epic. This is the framework within which the duel can be staged, with some modifications for balance.

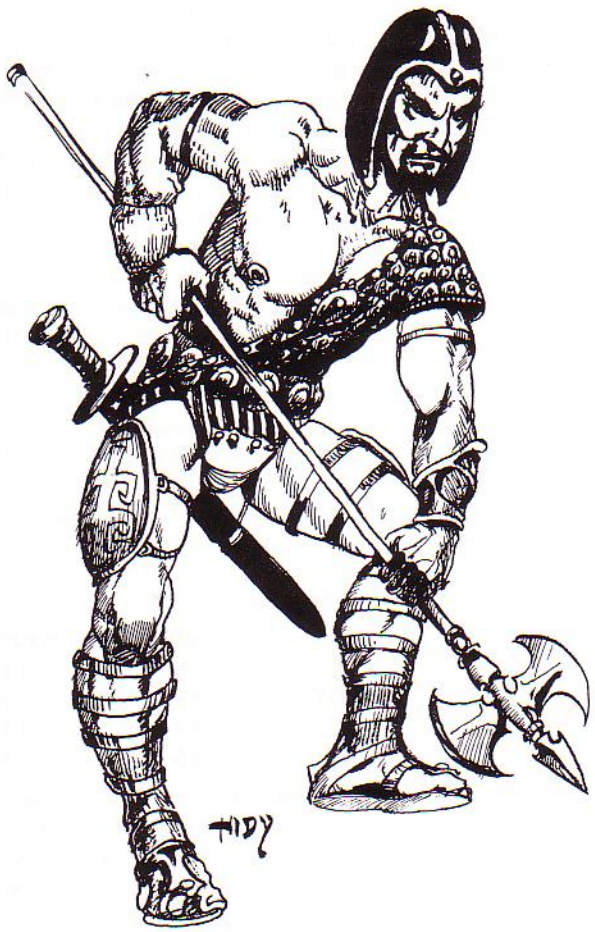
Obviously, these god-favored warriors were not ordinary men, but had special characteristics which elevated them above the mass of opposing spearmen. Hector, although stronger and braver than almost all the Greeks, was not so brave nor so strong as Achilles. Their personal characteristics are given below:

	Achilles	Hector
ST	**16**	**14**
DX	**13**	**12**
IQ	**13**	**13**
MA	**10**	**12**

The armor of Achilles was special due to its divine origin, while that of Hector, although well made, was ordinary. The skill and experience of Hector compensated for the encumbrance of the breastplate and greaves. Therefore, Hector's armor is the equivalent of chainmail, with no penalties. Achilles' armor is the equivalent of plate, with no penalties. Each of the heroes carries a normal large, round shield, each may carry two spears and wear a dagger. The extra is carried in the shield hand and must be readied before used. A spear cast is ½ normal DX adjustment, that is −1 DX for every 2 hexes the target is distant (round fractions down).

If you desire to add other warriors to either side, their ST and DX would be 12, their IQ 8. Armor is chainmail equivalent, their equipment: a large shield, spear and dagger. They may serve as either the hero's immediate companions, or as the mass of battling warriors through whom the heroes must wade to get at each other. Both functions are illustrated in the epic. These other warriors may also have a spoiling function, getting in the way of cast spears or trying to get the enemy hero with a lucky thrust of their own. Back-stabbing is a legitimate tactic.

The battles of the **ILIAD**, whether the mass actions or the individual duels, were played against the larger scheme of Zeus' divine plan. The



various gods and goddesses backed first one faction then another, much as gamblers back different horses. Some stayed relatively loyal to their chosen favorites, Athena to Achilles, Apollo to Hector. Divine assistance provided to these men resembled the spells in **WIZARD**. To receive divine aid, the heroes must generally roll against IQ.

Achilles has three of these divine "spells" plus one of his own:

1. A normal aid spell as Athena guides his hand. Roll after movement and apply the effects immediately. It may be attempted only once.

2. Athena's breath may blow aside the first cast weapon which actually strikes Achilles. This is rolled for after the weapon strikes but before damage is rolled. It takes effect *retroactively*, that is, the weapon is considered to have been a miss and the hit is completely negated. This aid is also available only once, and failure to make the roll means the spell is lost.

3. Athena retrieves the first spear cast by Achilles which misses its target. Once again, roll on the miss. The weapon is immediately available on the next turn and does not require a ready weapon action. If Athena does not retrieve the spear, she will not do so again.

4. Achilles has his own "spell": his mighty war cry which chilled the Trojan's blood. He may shout it once, and its effects are:

a. each opponent has his DX reduced by 3 for that turn

b. each opponent must make a saving throw against IQ or he may neither move, nor attack that turn, only defend.

c. for the duration of the turn, each opponent is treated as if he has received 3 hits that turn which count toward the 5 needed for a DX adjustment on the next turn. At the beginning of the next turn, these points are restored. Saving throw is against IQ. For all of these effects, roll *once* per opponent, and a failure to make the roll imposes all three effects.

The "spells" available to Hector are three:

1. Apollo's shadow, a normal seven megahex shadow. It may be invoked twice per game at any time during the turn sequence, rolling against IQ. It is automatically invoked whenever Hector takes 5 or more hits in one turn. No matter how it takes effect, the spell is never available more than twice. Failure to make the necessary roll does not affect its later availability. The spell has a two turn duration.

2. Apollo may grant one aid spell, exactly as that available to Achilles by his protectress.

3. Hector also had a terrible war cry which was not so horrible as Achilles'. The reductions are 2 rather than 3. It may be shouted once, otherwise it is the same.

Use the **WIZARD** board. The heroes begin on opposing sides in the entrance hexes. Neither may leave the field until his opponent is killed. It does not matter who kills the hero so long as he expires. Ordinary warriors may be forced to retreat off the board if they are against the edge when they take five or more hits; if they do so, they are gone for good. They may also panic (instead of being frozen by the war cry). Panic is random movement off the board. To better simulate the fearsomeness of the heroes in battle, you might also require an ordinary warrior to roll against IQ when attacked by either Achilles or Hector, failure meaning the poor fellow turns tail and runs off the board.

With these modifications to **MELEE** and **WIZARD**, you are ready to take up spear and shield and stand before the towering walls of Ilion. As Achilles, you have an opportunity to wipe the stain from the honor of Helen's husband Menelaos, as Hector to save your city from pillage. Helen's face may have launched a thousand ships, but Hector's valor may sink them! May Apollo or Athena be at your side.

III. ODYSSEUS IN THE CYCLOPS' CAVE *(OR NOBODY KILLS SOMEBODY)*

Homer's second epic, the **ODYSSEY** is the story of one of the Greek heroes' return home. The hero, Odysseus, had angered Poseidon, and the god placed many obstacles in the

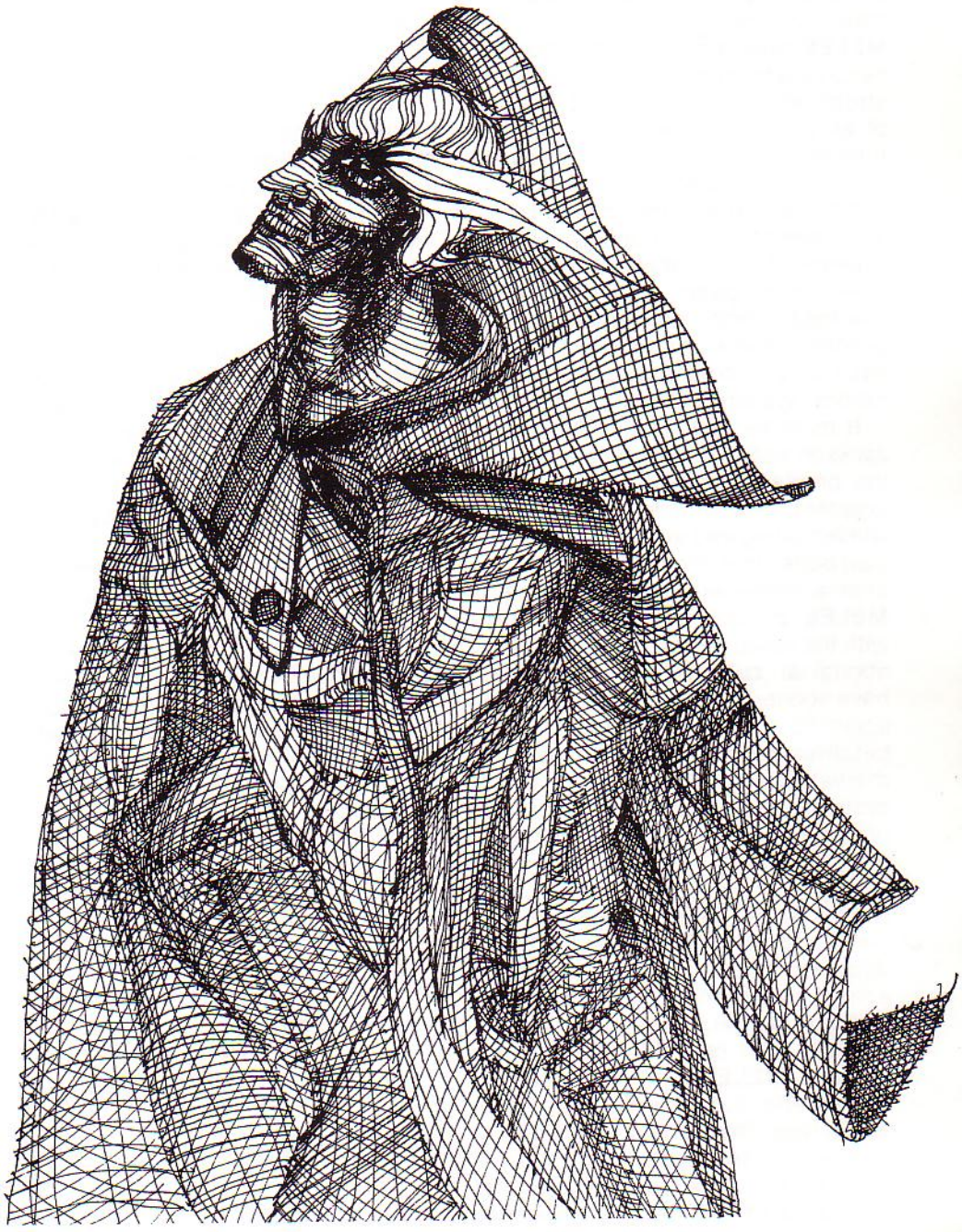
sailor's way, delaying his homecoming for ten years. One of these obstacles was the cyclops Polyphemos. Odysseus and some of his crew were trapped in the cyclops cave when the giant one-eyed monster rolled a massive stone across the entrance. In the epic, the Greeks fashioned a spear and blinded the brute, then escaped from the cave by clinging to the bottom of his sheep. Odysseus, before blinding the cyclops, had told him his name was Nobody. Thus, when the giant roared in pain and his fellows came to aid him, in answer to their question who had injured him, the unfortunate replied, "Nobody." The other cyclops had better things to do than listen to such drivel and left.

This scenario is solitaire and played on the **MELEE** board which represents the cave. One set of entrance hexes is the blocked cave mouth. Odysseus has four crewmen with him. Their ST and DX are 12, the hero's ST 12, DX 14, and an IQ of 14. The Greeks have neither arms nor armor, only one spear which they must share. Odysseus has two "spells" which simulate his reputation for clever, quick words: a confusion spell with a presumed ST of one, and a limited control person. The latter has only one purpose: if the cyclops has been blinded, and stumbles against the entrance, Odysseus may try this spell. If he succeeds, the cyclops will roll away the stone and flee into the outer world. If he fails, either the cyclops will eat the Greeks, or they will have to get used to the smell of rotting cyclops while they starve in the dark cave. The scenario assumes that unlike the epic, the Greeks botched their first strike, and the cyclops is armed with his club and very angry. Any time the Greeks get a hit with the spear, roll against the spear carrier's adjDX −2 to see if the cyclops is blinded. The Greeks are huddling together, and therefore must occupy adjacent hexes.

The cyclops' move is always a charge attack if not engaged, a shift attack if engaged, and an attack in hand-to-hand combat. The characteristics of the cyclops are those of the **WIZARD** giant. When he moves to attack, he will always attack the center of the group. Once he is blinded, his options are the same, but his movement changes. Roll one six-sided die for direction. Roll a second for distance in hexes. Even if he rolls a six for distance, he still charge attacks. If he runs into a wall, he takes one ST point in damage. The **WIZARD** countermix includes a beautiful cyclops.

In this scenario, if you can lie, cheat and steal, you might make it home. One hint, though: don't kill the poor guy before he opens the door, even Odysseus couldn't lie to a rock and get it to roll away.

In each of these scenarios, surviving is not easy. The heroes won their battles not merely by skill but by luck, the roll of the die. I have meant it to be hard to recreate the hero's feats in personal battle. The same techniques may be applied to other fantasy battles. For example, David (a small hobbit-like figure with a sling) can meet Goliath of Gath (a Hector-like hero), or Horatio can defend a narrow bridge. May your fantasies be pleasant!



HARMONIOUS FISTS IN **MELEE**

by

David James Ritchie

As a flexible system for the recreation of a variety of man-to-man combat situations, **MELEE** is just about in a class by itself. The system is clean and abstract to a degree uncommon among the current plethora of *sword and jockstrap* role playing games. However, the subject matter of the game (combat with archaic weapons) seems to have gone to the designer's head. He has all but forgotten the most basic and universal type of combat known to man: unarmed combat. Certainly, **MELEE** does contain provisions for hand-to-hand combat which might be stretched to cover unarmed combat of all types, but the H-to-H combat rules were basically intended to cover close-quarters grappling of an almost instinctual variety (lots of ear-biting and eye-gouging, but not much science). No real thought seems to have been given to the idea of unarmed combatants methodically punching and kicking the hell out of each other according to any efficient, rational system of attack.

It must be pointed out that Steve Jackson seems to have picked up on the problem because he allows for adjacent hex attacks in **WIZARD** without going into any detail. That's a step better than the flying-in-the-face-of-an-armed-enemy approach used in **MELEE**, but only a step. The fact is, with the notable exceptions of certain aboriginal cultures, most societies have sooner or later developed some scientific form of unarmed combatatives (loosely referred to today as *martial arts*). Nearly all of these systems have expressed the same principles of balance, leverage, pressure and concentration as keynotes to the system. In fact, the uniformity of these systems is far greater than their differences. Additionally, most of these systems allow practicioners to effectively combat larger, stronger armed enemies with only their bare hands and feet. **MELEE** in no way accounts for any effective unarmed resistance of this type. The damage inflicted by a supposedly trained warrior striking with bare hands or feet is 1-3, regardless of strength or experience. That's acceptable if your main interest is in the various types of styles of archaic ironmongery, and if your use of the game involves unarmed combat only as an incidental element when someone drops or breaks their ready weapon. For those who want something more, the following rules are offered for consideration.

BARE-HANDED ATTACKS

All characters even vaguely humanoid and sentient may engage in a bare-handed attack against any enemy in an adjacent hex (providing, of course, that the attacker is facing his victim). When rolling for a hit, the attacker misses on a 16, 17 or 18, regardless of DX. on a roll of 17 or 18, the attacker not only fails to score a hit against his target, but may suffer damage to himself. Anytime a player rolls 17 or 18 against a target character who is armed or who is wearing chainmail or plate armor, the attacker is considered to have missed any vulnerable areas and to have struck the enemy weapon, helmet or whatever, breaking or gashing that part of his body with which he struck. The attacker rolls for damage as if he had attacked himself. In such cases, no hits are deflected or absorbed due to armor, shield, etc. The value of an unarmed attack in terms of number of dice is dependent on the ST rating of the attacker (ST being interpreted in this case as both sheer physical power, and as velocity of delivery). Characters with an ST rating of less than 9 get 1-4 dice. All others follow:

ST	HIT DICE
9	1 – 3
10	1 – 2
11	1 – 1
12	1
13	1
14	1 + 1
15	1 + 2
16	1 + 3
17	2
18	2 + 1
19	2 + 2
20 +	3

All bare-handed attacks are resolved in the same manner and with the same benefits and penalties as for other attacks. The only difference is in the weapon used, and in the possible consequences of a miss (damage to oneself). Non-humanoid or non-sentient beings do not fall within the parameters of this system since their attack abilities would be governed by a large number of factors other than physical strength and speed of attack (claws, talons, fangs and tails should have their own scale of damage unrelated to the possibilities inherent in a scientifically delivered side-snap kick).

ORIENTAL BOXING

Whatever name it goes under, Oriental Boxing is a form of combat which employs both scientifically recognized principles of mechanics and the concept of mystical concentration of powers of the psychic variety. Since, to a greater or lesser extent, all forms of martial art employ at least the body-mechanics elements of the various styles of Oriental Boxing, all attempts at rationalizing unarmed combat will, for our purposes, be included under this heading. Whereas normal warriors may be assumed to have some knowledge of unarmed combat techniques, the Oriental Boxer is assumed to have achieved levels of proficiency with hands, feet, etc. which allow him to attempt bare-handed feats not within the capabilities of lesser men. He may not only engage an adjacent foe with bare hands but may **Charge Attack** with bare hands (something denied normal combatants). He may choose a **Shift and Defend** option whether or not he has any ready weapon (a reflection of his special training in blocking out enemy attacks). Master Boxers may attempt a saving throw on 3 dice whenever a thrown weapon (not missile weapon) enters their hex when they are not engaged; if they make their saving throw, they may be considered to have caught or deflected the thrown weapon.

PASSIVE SELF DEFENSE

Certain religious sects teach a type of self defense to their monks (and sometimes even novices) which does not involve any striking of the enemy. The discipline is entirely defensive in nature and involves (in physical rather than mystical terms) using the weight and momentum of one's opponent to his disadvantage (i. e. throwing him). If you have a particularly weak character (especially a wizard type as in **WIZARD**), you may want to increase his survival chances by allowing him the ability to employ these techniques.

A character who has mastered the art of passive self defense in any of its forms may melee bare-handed with certain advantages. Any time an enemy strikes at him, the attacker must make his roll to hit or be thrown to the ground in any hex adjacent to the defender (defender's choice of hex). If a character is thrown to the ground in this manner, he automatically drops any weapons he had ready. Individuals who have mastered the art of passive self-defense may always refuse H-to-H combat. Anytime H-to-H combat is refused, the initiator is thrown to the ground in any hex adjacent to the defender.

Strictly speaking, no SD master should be allowed to use any edged weapon, heavy club, pole weapon, missile weapon, etc. Such non-lethal devices as the sai, jutte, escrima, manrikigusari (a form of bola) or even nunchaku and tonfa (used in a non-lethal manner) or kendo might be allowed. While such decisions are up to the players, bear in mind that no proponent of passive self-defense would use violent means to kill an enemy (some would not even strike a blow).

ORIENTAL WEAPONRY

The following weapons would be common among monks, priests, etc., who were proficient at unarmed combat. Samurai and Ninja would be familiar with most of them as well as with **SHA-KEN** (see **TSG** #13), spear, bow, etc. In addition, Samurai would be armed with two knives: the KATANA (equal to a broadsword, but 2-handed) and the WAKIZASHI (equal to the shortsword).

KENDO: A stick roughly equal to the quarterstaff, but shorter and handier by far (DX adjustment for disarming attempt is only −2.) Damage = 1 + 2. ST = 10.

JUTTE or SAI: Both weapons are essentially the same except for the hook on the jutte used for catching an opponent's sword. They are blunt, round-edged weapons used for striking and disarming an enemy. You may attempt to disarm an enemy with either by striking at their weapon (−2 DX). Does 1-1 damage. No ST minimum required.

ESCRIMA: A rattan stick (slatted) popular in the Phillipines. May be used as a symbol of office. Does 1-2 damage (it's made to make you think twice, not kill you). No ST requirement. An escrima will *not* inflict a killing wound. Good for arena or practice combat.

NUNCHAKU: Two oak sticks about a foot long joined by a chain or thong about 4" or more long forms a nasty weapon with really lethal qualities. Ideally, the two chains are joined by a swivel head. Minimum ST of 11. Used for striking, does 2 + 2 damage. May be thrown for 2 dice damage. Carried in H-to-H combat and used in lieu of a dagger it may inflict 1 die damage (due to strangling with it).

TONFA: Used for striking (like the sai and jutte), the tonfa may do 1 die damage. It may not be used to disarm an enemy. Tonfas may not be thrown (which is all that distinguishes them from a club in effect).

MANRIKIGUSARI: Another light but lethal weapon common to the Orient at one time. Essentially it is only a length of chain with a metal weight at each end. It has the same properties as the bola (**TSG** #13) and, in addition, may be used as a nunchak for 2 dice damage at close range. It is useless for H-to-H. ST required is 9. May be used to block enemy stroke (SHIFT AND DEFEND option).

Some of these weapons types are already subsumed (for all practical purposes anyway) in the **MELEE** Weapons Table. The descriptions offered here are merely included as a guide to the sort of weapons which are compatible with common unarmed combat situations (i. e. those weapons which don't normally put an unarmed character entirely out of the game). Generally, characters who are unarmed will wear no armor. What little armor is worn will be roughly equal to leather armor.

Finally, one of the most interesting situations involving these rules dealt with a combined **MELEE-WIZARD** situation in which a wizard (ST = 12, DX = 11, IQ = 11, armed with a staff) was pitted against a pair of fighters in chain mail and armed to the teeth. The wizard was considered to be an expert at passive self-defense, but was forbidden to use any physical weapon (including his staff) or strike a blow of any sort except magical. Both fighters averaged 3 superior in attributes, but went down to defeat in the end anyway (though it was close for awhile).

ALPHA OMEGA
CORRECTIONS & REVISIONS

by

Kenneth W. Burke

Though **ALPHA OMEGA** has excellent concepts and components, it is also the victim of a "rush order" job on rules. Several illustrations in the rulebook are erroneous; charts are missing term descriptions; two special weapons (the reflector and the dispersion mine) are left undescribed. The following should alleviate some of these problems:

1. **Non-Energy Functions** — The non-energy functions log section is broken down into *two* areas, not *three*. Its section is the rectangle formed by the program and target sections of the log sheet; a **B** should be placed in the circle within the target **rectangle** to point this out; the error is on page four.

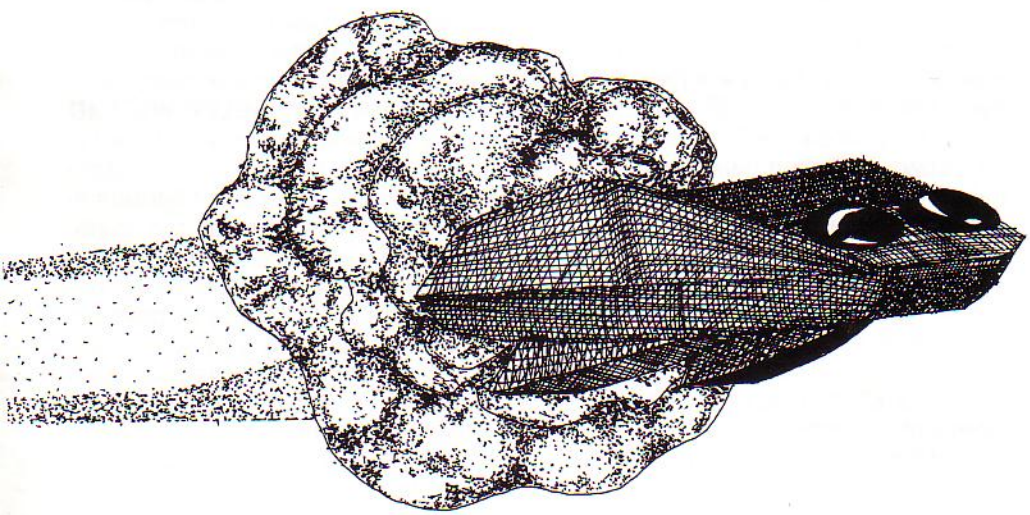
2. **Ship Movement Plotting** — When writing down the maneuvers a ship will perform, place a hyphen between each individual maneuver. A ship moving at a speed of two and making a left turn, for example, would have its movement plot written as 1-L-1. If a ship performs *lateral* movement, though, a hyphen is ***not*** placed between the lateral direction the ship travels and the number of hexes that the ship moved laterally. Were a ship to move lateral left four hexes, turn right, and move one hex, for example, its movement plot would be written as L4-R-1. The ship maneuver illustrations on page seven are **incorrect**; the one at the top of the page should say R4R1, not R4L1, while the one at the bottom should say R1R1, not RR1. Using the above hyphen rule, the correct positions are now R4-R-1, and R1-R-1. Human and Rhylsh ships moving at light speed may only *go straight*; they may ***not*** make any right or left turns, nor may they engage in lateral movement. The Drove ships, due to the nature of their *pendulum drive*, are not hindered by this restriction.

3. **Dispersion Field** — If you have trouble trying to figure out dispersion field damage, remember, if all dispersion field factors allocated to an attack minus the distance in hexes minus the target's cloaking factors, (if any are assigned to it), minus the target's shielding factors, (if any are assigned to it), equal one or greater, a hit has occurred; you consult the dispersion table.

4. **Table Results** — A result of **X** on the dispersion table means that the target has been destroyed; the attacker receives one victory point for each energy factor that the target had left prior to destruction; the attacker also receives additional victory points for the target's destruction (provided, naturally, the target was **worth** additional victory points). When rolling for results on the damage hit table that require a column number greater than seventeen, roll for damages on the seventeen column; add to whatever damages received, though, the number that equals the result of subtracting seventeen from the greater-than-seventeen number. Let's say, for example, a player has twenty-four factors worth of beam strength, after all modifications have been taken into consideration, striking an enemy vessel. The player would roll for damage results as if the strength of twenty-four was seventeen; after the die roll result (which we'll say is four) has been achieved, though, each damage result, those being the **4e**, the **d**, the **s**, and the **w**, is increased by the number formed by subtracting seventeen from twenty-four, that number being seven, the end result being that the enemy vessel receives **11e**, **7d**, **7s**, and **7w** as damage results.

5. **Carriers & Ship Launching** — Carriers may now recover **any** launched ship that if friendly, provided the carriers have room to hold them. Vessels that carry other vessels or fighters may launch them into the same hex they occupy at **no** energy point cost to the launching or launched vessels. Launched ships still can't perform any ship functions on the game move that they are launched, (fighters being excluded from this rule, naturally).

6. **Special Weaponry Detonation** — Xenolite bombs, energy webs, scramblers, and black hole bombs are considered to have been launched or fired after the movement of all ships has been plotted, but before any ship has been moved. All ships that move through hexes containing (a) xenolite bombs, (b) energy webs, (c) enemy minefields, (d) scrambler fire, (e) a black hole bomb or hexes adjacent to a black hole bomb, or (f) a black hole mine or hexes adjacent to a black hole mine are automatically attacked by the weapons. The weapons may attack an unlimited amount of vessels in the *movement phase* following their being launched, laid, or fired. Notice that players no



longer wait until a ship completes its movement before attacking. Mine fields and the black hole mine are not placed on the mapboard, but have their positions recorded by paper and pencil; their positions are only revealed when an enemy vessel moves into the hex they occupy or, in the case of the black hole mine, adjacent to or into the hex it occupies. If confusion arises over whether or not a vessel moved into or (in the case of the black hole weapons) adjacent to a hex containing a special weapon, place a string or straight-edge ruler from the center of the hex that the ship started its movement in to the center of the hex that the ship ended its movement in. Should the line formed cross into a special weapons hex (not simply bisect the hex but cross into it), the ship comes under attack by that special weapon. Black hole bombs and mines will now atuomatically destroy all ships that move adjacent to them as well as those ships that move into the hexes that they occupy.

7. **Map Set-Ups** — The map edges of map set up B are the same as those of map set-up A.

8. **Scenarios** — on page twenty, standard victory point awards are given for the destruction of *attack carriers*. This is a mistake; the *attack carrier* should be called a ***carrier***. In scenario #5, it is stated that the Droves win the battle automatically if they destroy the Human mine sweeper. This is an error; the Droves win the battle automatically if they destroy the Human **transport** (there ***is*** a difference); in scenarios #11 and #12 the Rhylsh players ***cannot*** attack their own ships or outposts (lest there be no way for them to win); in scenario #19, only ***one*** moon counter is used, and it is placed in the same hex as the planet (the reason being the areas of space the hexes are supposed to represent).

9. **Combat Results** — The **ALPHA OMEGA** combat chart and dispersion tables do not give definitions for the combat results. To determine them, check in page twelve of the rulebook and section number four of this article.

10. **Missing Special Weapons** — In their eagerness to publish **ALPHA OMEGA**, Battleline Publications forgot to tell us what the *reflector* and the *dispersion mine* were. Though I have no idea what the reflector is, players will consider the dispersion mine to be a mine that has its damage results rolled for on the A3 section of the dispersion table.

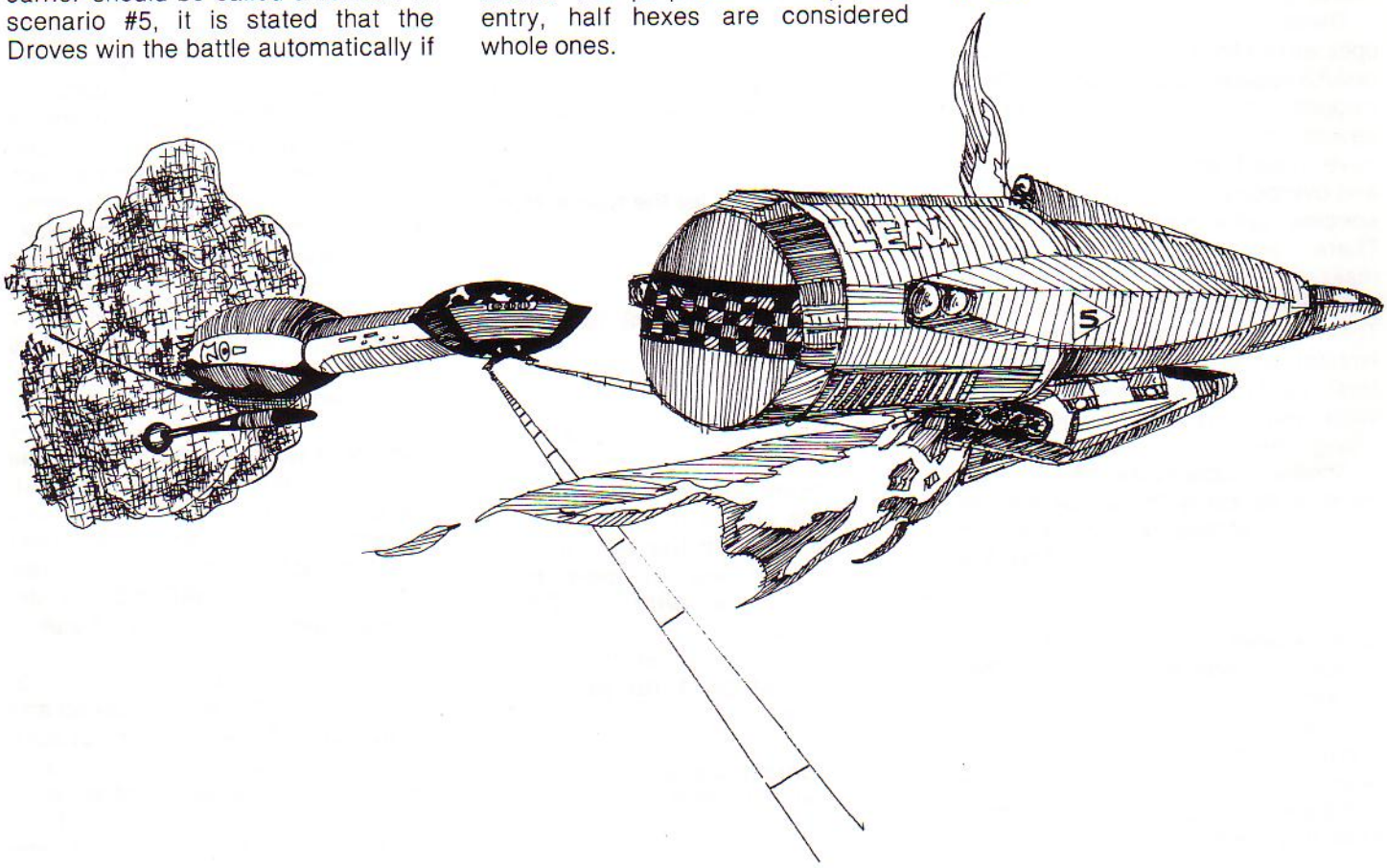
11. **Entry Into Mapboard** — Unless otherwise stated by the special rules of whatever scenario being played, ships enter the mapboard at whatever speed their players desire. For purposes of mapboard entry, half hexes are considered whole ones.

12. **Mapboard Hexes** — In map set-up B, hexes are formed without numbers in them. Whenever this happens, assign the hexes the numbers they would have were they a part of map B.

13. **Mason Field Generator** — The Drove player may never use the mason field generator; the weapons characteristic chart is mistaken when it says that the Droves can, upon acquiring a Tech 2 level.

14. **Hidden Movement** — Scenarios in which both sides use hidden movement are best played when a referee is used to determine the positions of the hidden ships (it stands to reason that if the ships of both sides are hidden they cannot be seen by either player, ergo neither player can tell when a friendly hidden ship can spot an enemy one via the friendly hidden ship's ship sensors).

With the coming of **Star Wars** and **Close Encounters of the Third Kind**, many wargaming companies have attempted to cash in on the movies with their own space wargames. Though the effort is appreciated, the companies had better make sure that games have been given special consideration, and are not simply put together in a rush order fashion. **ALPHA OMEGA** is not without good qualities; it ***can*** be saved!



Demons!

Based on THE MOTE IN GOD'S EYE

by Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle

by

Bruce M. Mickelson

The unusual features of the Moties as a species, and the awesome capabilities of their warrior class, soon came to mind when our local group began playing Metagaming's **MELEE**.

As described in the novel, the inhabitants of the Murchison star system (called *Moties* for short) are a species roughly humanoid in form, about 130 to 150 centimeters in height. Aside from the usual two legs and one head, they are multiple-armed with two manipulating arms on the right side, and a single heavily-muscled arm on the left. The left shoulder slopes from the top of the head straight to the arm, and the right side of the head has an outsized earlobe. The face has two eyes, a reduced nose, and a mouth set in a permanent smile. Moties are covered with short fur, of various colors and markings.

These colors identify the various species of Moties, as their hallmark is task/biological specialization. Being trapped on their star system for several million human years, they have coped with limited resources and overpopulation by producing subspecies tailor-made to job fields. There are Mediators, Decision-makers, Porters, Engineers, etc.; each with special traits and abilities. They are very good at their jobs. Habitat pressures and intermittent, total warfare have favored hybird vigor, and killed off the sluggards, for a long time.

Another subspecies that is very good at its job is the Motie Warrior. The other Moties regard them with awe, and refer to them as *DEMONS*. They are sentient, but not innovative. They are physically fast, agile, and have excellent reflexes. Their natural weaponry alone is formidable. They are fanged, have horny spurs on arm and leg joints, as well as sharp hooves on the feet; a kick forward or backward is dangerous. The two right arms and the upper left are well muscled, and the lower left arm, normally vestigal and lost soon after infancy in other Moties, is developed into a full arm with a dagger-sized cutting edge at the hand. Hand-to-hand fighting against humans, other Moties, and each other, is simply murderous. Equipped with modern artificial weapons they are natural shots and fast reacting fighters with a smooth knack for finding cover. They can repair any weapon they are taught to use, but rarely invent new ones. In battles between each other in the novel, the rule was that *when a Warrior fired, an opponent Warrior died.*

Given such a character type, a warrior bred for more than 100,000 years to do its work exclusively and efficiently, its application to a wargame is natural. **MELEE** was chosen because modern weapons are not yet well represented on a personal level, but ancient, edged weapons are in this fine game. One can set up a game with a group of hired Motie *bodyguards* for an Empire trader on a less developed world, able to carry only local-type *primitive* weapons. Hand-to-hand infighting would still be useful in this situation. The following is a design sheet for the typical Motie Warrior:

Dexterity: 18
Strength: 12/8 (weapon/damage)
Movement allowance: 11
Due to three-arm arrangement, can carry three one-handed weapons at one time, but can strike with the two right or the one left only at one time, with no DX penalty.
+ 2 pts. on all attacks.
Fur stops 1 hit per attack.
Inflicts three dice damage *automatically* in hand-to-hand.

The Motie Warrior's dexterity is somewhat limited by the **MELEE** system. Actually, their dexterity is quite literally off the scale! For the sake of game clarity, a die roll of 16 or 17 will still be a miss, and an 18 means a broken weapon. A Warrior will not drop a weapon: he is too dexterous for that. They have the training and instinct to make a good shot every time, directed at the most vulnerable point on Motie or Human. (And if you can't beat 15 with three dice, please play **STELLAR CONQUEST** with me!) There will be no time for repair of a weapon in the heat of combat, even for a Motie.

The weapons strength of 12 is a reflection of the Motie's dexterity, and the ingenuity of Motie engineers in designing improved edged weapons that are easier to use and more efficient. The personal damage strength of 8 is due to the fact that despite their agility and toughness, they are physically smaller and lighter than men, and could not withstand as much injury. Because of the unique three-arm system, a Warrior can handle three weapons at a time, such as a light crossbow and a small shield, or three short swords. However, to avoid a dexterity loss, they must strike with the arms of one side or the other and not all three at the same time. Their fur, though short, is similar to that of a wolf or doberman, and would provide some protection. This is also a compensation for their inability to wear any type of artificial armor. Uncomfortable over a fur pelt, it would also cover their integral body weapons. Only a Motie engineer would be able to design completely new weapons for **MELEE**, so the standard game weapons will be used only.

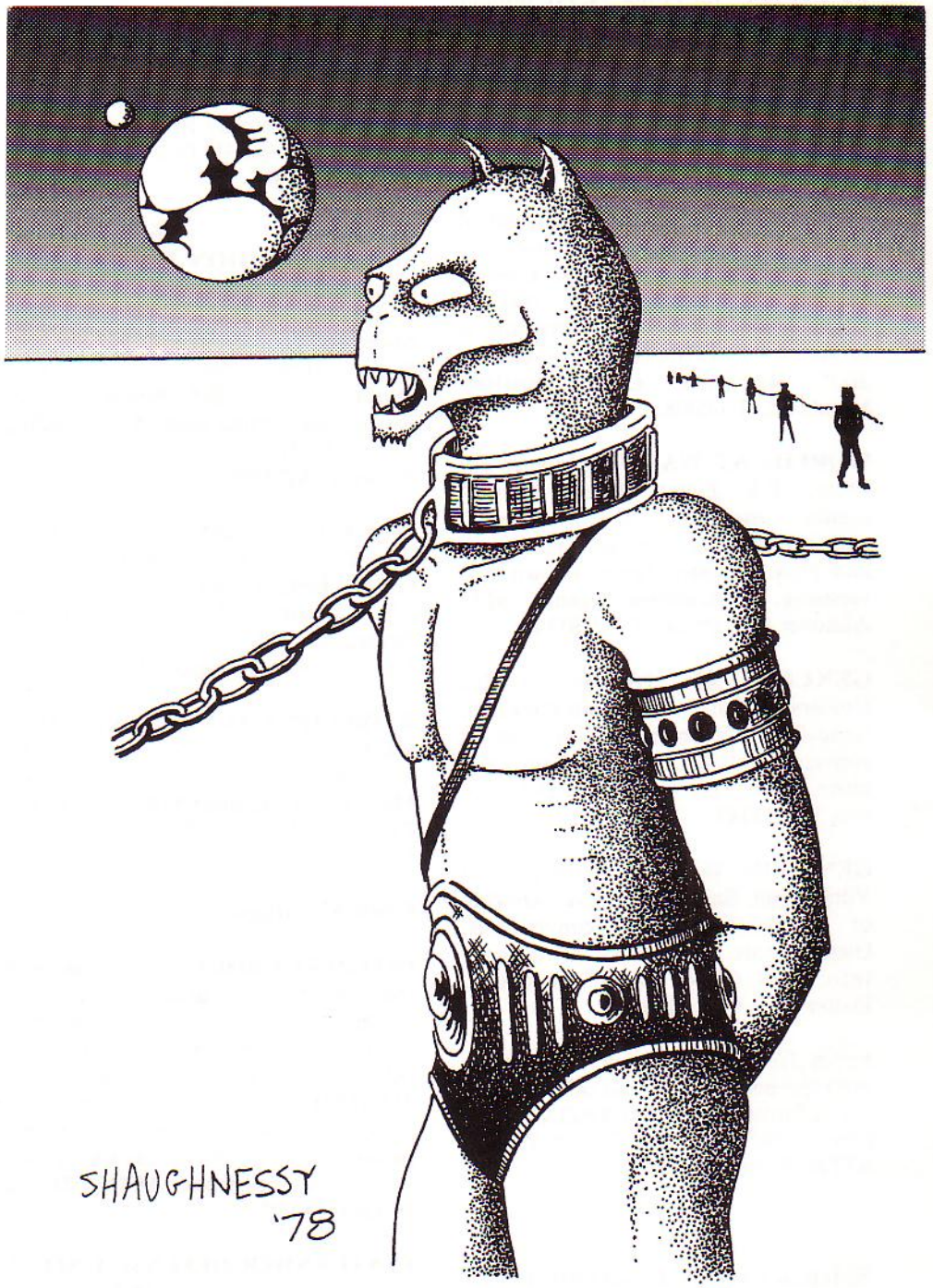
Movement is set at a value of eleven, due to the Motie's speed and agility. And their ability to inflict such terrible damage in hand-to-hand, weapon, or missile combat is a measure of the Warrior's ability to strike hard at an enemy with any

weapon, including their own bodies, with uncanny accurracy and skill. These creatures reflect a character with low damage value, but extremely high hit value.

Despite the Motie's faster breeding rate, that would normally give them an advantage in numbers, a **MELEE** game must have at least two humans per Warrior to prevent a completely one-sided game. In test games using standard humans, a favored tactic is to send in a line of armored archers to screen a line of shielded pikemen, who can then move into charge attack position. The spearmen can then do extra damage while the archers move in with short swords. Humans should be picked with high dexterities or armor or both. A special band of strong, well-experienced heroes can be useful. If you play the humans, you must expect heavy losses from the very beginning. Motie Warriors are tough opponents that can only be opposed by sheer numbers, or by similar quality heroes in armor. For the really adventurous, Warriors can be used in the new **WIZARD** microgame with no game modifications. That wizard had better be good, or fast!

This **MELEE** design had to reflect the fact that the Motie Warrior is neither a rampaging giant, nor an alien superman. They are tough, lean, bred for hybrid vigor, and inbred talents for weapons, excellent reflexes, and nasty bodily weapons. They can be killed, but for a price. Do not be discouraged if your humans get run over by Warriors! Simply add more people and points to your side to find a better balance. But if you ever wondered what it would be like to be a Motie Decision-maker with Warriors under your command, you can have a blast with this addition to **MELEE**.

My thanks for the inspiration and testing efforts of Corwyn Prater, David Ray, and Doug Anderson.



NEWS & PLUGS

Gaming Conventions:

GREAT CANADIAN GAMES ADVENTURE: (May 20-22) Holiday Inn, Ottawa, Ontario Canada. Guests include James Dunnigan and Lin Carter. Events include tournaments, seminars, dealers, auctions, films, and 24 hour gaming. Info: CANGAMES, 201-360 Dundas St., Vanier, Ont., Canada K1L 7W7.

PENNCON '78: (June 23-25) Widner College, Chester, PA. Events include tournaments, workshops, demonstrations, auction, and movies. Info: PENN CON '78, c/o Strategy & Fantasy World, Valley Forge Shopping Center, King of Prussia, PA, 19406.

M M H S: Midwest Military Historical Society is sponsoring a convention June 24-25 at the Elmhurst College campus near Chicago. All types of games will be played. Admission is $1.50 per day. Info: Tony Adams, 3605 Bobolink Lane, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008.

WORLDS AT WAR 78: (July 28-30) Phila., PA. Events include tournaments, movies, demonstrations, auction, costume contest, cash prizes and plaques. Info: James Brown Advertising, Convention Agents, 9223 Andover Rd., Phila., PA, 19114.

GENCON XI: (August 17-20) University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Kenosha, Wisconsin. Major gaming convention with the usual events and more. Info: TSR Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI, 53147.

GEN. CON. WEST™ '78: (Sept. 2-4) Villa Hotel, San Mateo, CA. Another of the major gaming conventions. Usual events plus special attractions. Info: GEN. CON. WEST™, Box 4042, Foster City, CA, 94404.

For a free plug of your convention, send the name, date, and other pertinent information to METAGAMING: Box 15346, Austin, Texas 78761, ATTN: Robert Taylor.

Science Fiction Conventions:

DISCLAVE 78 (May 26-28) Sheraton Park Hotel, Washington DC. Membership $5. Info: Alexis Gilliland, 4030 8th St. S., Arlington VA 22204.

DEEPSOUTHCON 16 (June 2-4) Riveriera Hyatt House, Atlanta, GA. Guests of Honor: Clifford Simak, Gahan Wilson, Kelly Freas. Mem. $7.50 to 6/1, $10 at the door. Info: Heritage Press, Box 721, Forest Park, GA 30050.

MIDWESTCON (June 23-25) Holiday Inn North, Cincinnati, OH. Mem. $4. Info: Lou Tabakow, 3953 St. John's Terrace, Cincinnati, OH 45236.

WESTERCON 31 (July 1-4) Marriott Hotel, Los Angeles CA. GoHs: Poul Anderson, Don. C. Thompson, Jerry Pournelle. Mem $7 to 6/1, $10 after. Info: Westercon 31, Box 5785, Mission Hills, CA 91345.

IGUANACON — 36th WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION (August 31 — September 4) This is the major SF convention of the year. Members vote on the Hugo awards. Adams Hotel, Phoenix AZ. GoHs: Harlan Ellison, Bill Bowers, F. M. Busby. Supporting mem. $7, attending mem. $20. Info: Iguanacon, Box 1072, Phoenix, AZ 85001.

WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION: (October 13-15) Fort Worth, Texas. GoHs: Fritz Leiber, Gahan Wilson, Alicia Austin. Attendance will be limited to 750. Info: Mike Templin, 1309 S. West, Arlington, TX 76010.

BYOB-CON 8 (May 26-29) Hotel President, Kansas City, Missouri. GoHs: Kate Wilhelm, Jan Howard Finder. Mem $8, at the door $10. Info: Byob-Con, c/o John D. Taylor, 3720 Jefferson, Kansas City, MO 64111.

Club Meetings:

INTEREST GROUP: Adult gamers in the San Francisco area are invited to the meetings held every Friday night at the house of Steve Spoulos, 118 Eastridge Circle, Pacifica, CA 94044 (415-355-1683), 6:30 pm to the wee hours. Bring your own refreshments, 25¢ per person for the club treasury. Game interest varies from **ACQUIRE** to **WAR IN EUROPE**.

FLATLANDER DEFENSE UNIT: A gaming club is forming in Saskatoon. If interested, phone 374-5423 around noon for details. Murray Lindsay, 87 Grovesnor Crescent (basement), Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

CHICAGO STYLE D&D: This special interest group meets monthly, and the play level is extra-ordinary. For information call Mark Irwin 831-4361.

MITSGS: The MIT Strategic Games Society meets all day Saturday and Sunday at the Walker Memorial Building, Memorial Drive, Cambridge, MA. Games played include SPI, AH, **D&D, TRAVELLER**, and miniatures. MITSGS is co-sponsor (along with the American Wargaming Association) of the semi-annual conventions: WINTER and SUMMERCON.

RITWC: Rochester Institute of Technology Wargamers Club meets every Sunday afternoon at 12:30 in conference rooms B and C of the College Union Basement, 1 Lomb Memorial Drive, Rochester (Henrietta) NY. Games played include SPI, AH, **D&D, TRAVELLER**. All are welcome.

CASTLES & CANNONS COMBAT COMMAND: C&CCC is now forming in Lake County. The club meets twice monthly. Games played include all eras, real or imagined, boardgames, and miniatures. For information contact Mark Smith, 273 W. Walnut St., #149, Painesville, Ohio 44077. Ph. 216-352-4074.

CAPITAL CITY GAMERS: The Austin Wargamers' Club meets every other Saturday, at 1:00 pm. at the Old Quarry Branch Library, 7501 Village Center Drive, Austin, Texas. All wargamers are welcome. For information contact Mike Rose, 452-3923, or Kenny Green, 444-5003, or Joe Gibson, 452-7730.

THE SPACE GAMER will gladly give brief mention to clubs that do some SF and fantasy faming. Send the name of the club, address, and other pertinent information to METAGAMING: Box 15346, Austin, Texas 78761, ATTN: Robert Taylor.

Gaming News:

SDC CALLS IT QUITS: Dana Lombarg, President of Simulations Design Corp., announced SDC is ceasing business activities. The announcement was contained in a letter dated March 1, 1978, offering various properties of SDC for sale. SDC's history covered six years. During the early years SDC was the apparent challenger to SPI's STRATEGY & TACTICS magazine with SDC's own "game in every issue" publication, CONFLICT. When publication of CONFLICT ceased SDC's sales rapidly declined to insignificant levels. SDC joins a growing list of defunct wargaming efforts that includes RAND Games, Third Millenia, Jagdpanther, and others. When mergers and failing efforts are counted, commercial wargaming has to be regarded as a high mortality business.

$$$$: Vonda McIntyre was paid $60,000 for her new novel **Dreamsnake**.

MORE $$$$: Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle have had the movie options to **LUCIFER'S HAMMER** bought from them.

OTHER THINGS THAT CAME IN THE MAIL: PERILOUS ENCOUNTERS is a set of fantasy miniatures rules for the beginning miniatures player. The 44 page booklet contains rules for magic and exotic fantasy creatures. **PERILOUS ENCOUNTERS** is available from The Chaosium, Box 6302, Albany, CA 94606, for $5.

AUTHENTIC THAUMATURGY is by P. E. I. Bonewits, an academically accreditied occultist. His 100 page booklet is concerned with improving the realism of magic systems in fantasy role playing games through a comparative study of game system magic to the actual practice of magic and religious rites. Available from The Chaosium.

WORKS IN PROGRESS: SPI is working on two SF and fantasy games. FREEDOM IN THE GALAXY is planned for a June release, while SWORDS AND SORCERY should be available by mid-May. AH has scheduled a role playing game for production, and they are trying to buy the rights to DUNE.

THINGS THAT CAME IN THE MAIL: "The Flying Buffalo's Favorite Magazine", issue #36 is primarily devoted to FB's pbm computer game, STARWEB. The article describing a STARWEB game was most interesting as was the piece on the handling of a game turn. Both articles should serve to ease the misgivings average gamers have about joining a computer play-by-mail game. "TFBFM" Subscriptions: $4/6 issues, Flying Buffalo Inc., Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252. Single copy $1.

REVIEW: Richard Delap's excellent magazine has returned to publication. A must for the serious student of SF and fantasy. "Delap's F&SF Review" Subscriptions: $13.50 a year, Box 46572, West Hollywood, CA 90046.

NOMINATIONS: These are the nominees for the 1978 Nebula awards.

Novel
In the Ocean of Night *by* Gregory Benford
Gateway *by* Fred Pohl
Moonstar Odyssey *by* David Gerrold
Cirque *by* Terry Carr
Sword of the Demon *by* Richard Lupoff

Novella
Stardance *by* Spicer & Jeanne Robinson
Aztecs *by* Vonda McIntyre

Fantasy Novel
A Spell for Cameleon *by* Piers Anthony
Lord's Foul Bane *by* Stephen R. Donaldson
The Shining *by* Stephen King
Our Lady of Darkness *by* Fritz Leiber
The Simarillion *by* J. R. R. Tolkien

Tony Watson, who has done a number of reviews for TSG, has a regular column in "Ruritania", $1/4, Tony Watson, 201 Minnesota St., Las Vegas, Nevada 89107.

David Dyche is editing "The Pattern", a publication devoted to SF games, with an emphasis on fantasy role playing games. $6/6, David Dyche, 539 Florence St., Turlock, CA 95380. Single copy $1.50.

TSG recommends that you buy a single copy of a magazine before deciding to subscribe.

NEWS FROM THE DRAGON: Tim Kask, managing editor of THE DRAGON, has announced that issues 15 and 16 will carry "The Green Magician", which is the last of the Harold Shea stories by de Camp and Pratt.

MORE NOMINATIONS: The 1978 Hugo award nominees.

Novel:
The Forbidden Tower *by* Marion Zimmer Bradley
Time Storm *by* Gordon Dickson
Dying of the Light *by* George R. R. Martin
Lucifer's Hammer *by* Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle
Gateway *by* Frederik Pohl

Novella
A Shark in the Night *by* Gregory Benford
The Wonderful Secret *by* Keith Laumer
Aztecs *by* Vonda McIntyre
Stardance *by* Jeanne & Spider Robinson
In the Halls of the Martian Kings *by* John Varley

EVIL, MEAN, AND ROTTEN.

A fantasy game for the bad guys? Yea, verily. MONSTERS! MONSTERS! is the fantasy role-playing game from Metagaming, the folks who brought you MELEE and WIZARD. No more good-guy heroes. In MONSTERS! MONSTERS!, you become a monster character – come up from the dungeons – stalk into a town – and raise a little bit of the old brimstone. The eviller you are, the more experience points you earn.....

Monsters! Monsters! was designed by Ken St. Andre, lavishly illustrated by Liz Danforth, and edited by Steve Jackson of the Metagaming staff.

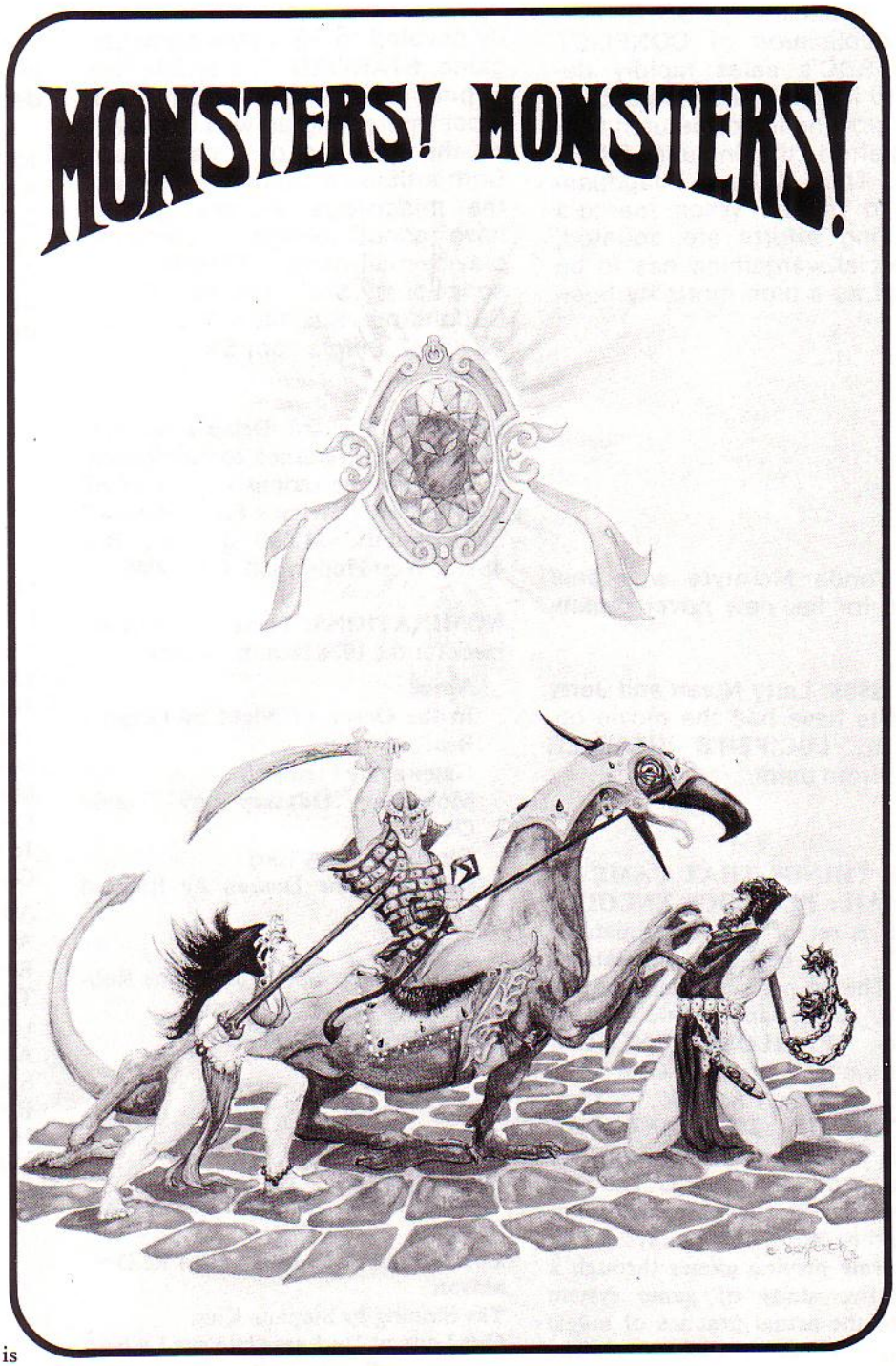
As with our previous game, *Stellar Conquest*, every effort was made to provide a clear, complete rule system. Major omissions and contradictions that plague other game systems are avoided by a carefully organized format. This is an excellent game for novice Game Masters and new fantasy buffs — and should be a relief for experienced gamers exhausted by confusing rule systems.

Monsters! Monsters! is a 52-page, 8½ by 11 rule book with Danforth's full-color cover. Also included are four maps for the Game Master to use in setting up an initial adventure.

Rules sections include:
- *Introduction*
- *Game Mastering and Setup*
- *Character Creation*
- *Experience Points*
- *Sequence of Play*
- *Combat (including General Discussion, Combat Turn Sequence, Wandering Enemies, Reaction Table, Saving Rolls, Unusual Combat, Unarmed Combat, and Weapons)*
- *Magic*

So put a new twist in your gaming — try *Monsters! Monsters!* Approved as an outlet for antisocial tendencies by the American Psychologists and Crazies Association.

METAGAMING
Box 15346
Austin, Texas 78761



MONSTERS! MONSTERS! is $5.95, but only $4.50 for subscribers to TSG....

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TSG #14 FEEDBACK RESULTS

Game Types	% Resp.	Rate
Space Tactical	85.0	7.60
Planetary Tactical	86.5	7.02
Future Society Level	80.3	6.94
Space Role Playing	77.2	6.51
Fantasy Role Playing	90.2	6.45
Fantasy Board Games	82.9	6.24

Magazines	% Resp.	Rate
The Space Gamer	94.8	7.86
Fire & Movement	25.4	7.29
Strategy & Tactics	71.5	7.10
Moves	55.4	6.97
White Dwarf	14.0	6.26
Campaign/Panzerfaust	21.2	6.20
The General	53.4	6.18
The Dragon	47.2	6.09
Wargamer's Digest	24.4	5.87
Military Modeling	19.7	5.63

Companies	% Resp.	Rate
Metagaming	93.3	8.21
SPI	86.5	7.24
The Chaosium	35.8	6.87
Game Designer's Workshop	45.6	6.82
Battleline (now Heritage)	30.1	6.66
Avalon Hill	76.2	6.55
TSR Hobbies	54.9	6.40
Flying Buffalo Inc.	43.5	6.37
Zocchi & Assoc.	42.0	5.89
EON	11.9	5.39
Excalibur	17.1	4.88
Attack Wargaming	18.7	3.53

Fantasy Role Games	% Resp.	Rate
TFT: Wizard	43.5	7.86
TFT: Melee	68.4	7.16
Dungeons & Dragons (New)	29.5	6.79
Empire of the Petal Throne	29.5	6.40
Dungeons & Dragons (Orig.)	54.4	6.35
Monsters! Monsters!	35.2	5.93
Dungeon!	32.1	5.58
Tunnels & Trolls	27.5	5.40

Fantasy Board Games	% Resp.	Rate
The Ring Trilogy	36.3	7.54
White Bear & Red Moon	33.7	7.29
Nomad Gods	21.2	7.00
Elric	11.9	6.96
Sorcerer	42.0	6.06
War of Wizards	14.0	5.56
Lanhkmar	16.1	4.97
Warlocks & Warriors	3.6	2.14

Planetary Tactical Games	% Resp.	Rate
Ogre	84.5	7.49
Starship Troopers	60.6	7.04
Rivets	47.2	6.88
Star Soldier	39.4	6.70
Chitin: I	57.0	6.68
Rift Trooper	7.3	2.71

Unclassified Games	% Resp.	Rate
Star Web	19.7	6.95
Cosmic Encounter	14.0	6.81

Future Society Games	% Resp.	Rate
Stellar Conquest	52.8	7.75
Godsfire	26.9	7.29
Imperium	25.0	6.72
After the Holocaust	21.8	6.69
Outreach	43.5	6.49
Star Probe/Empire	23.3	5.53
Star Raiders	11.0	3.36
Star Slavers	6.0	3.00

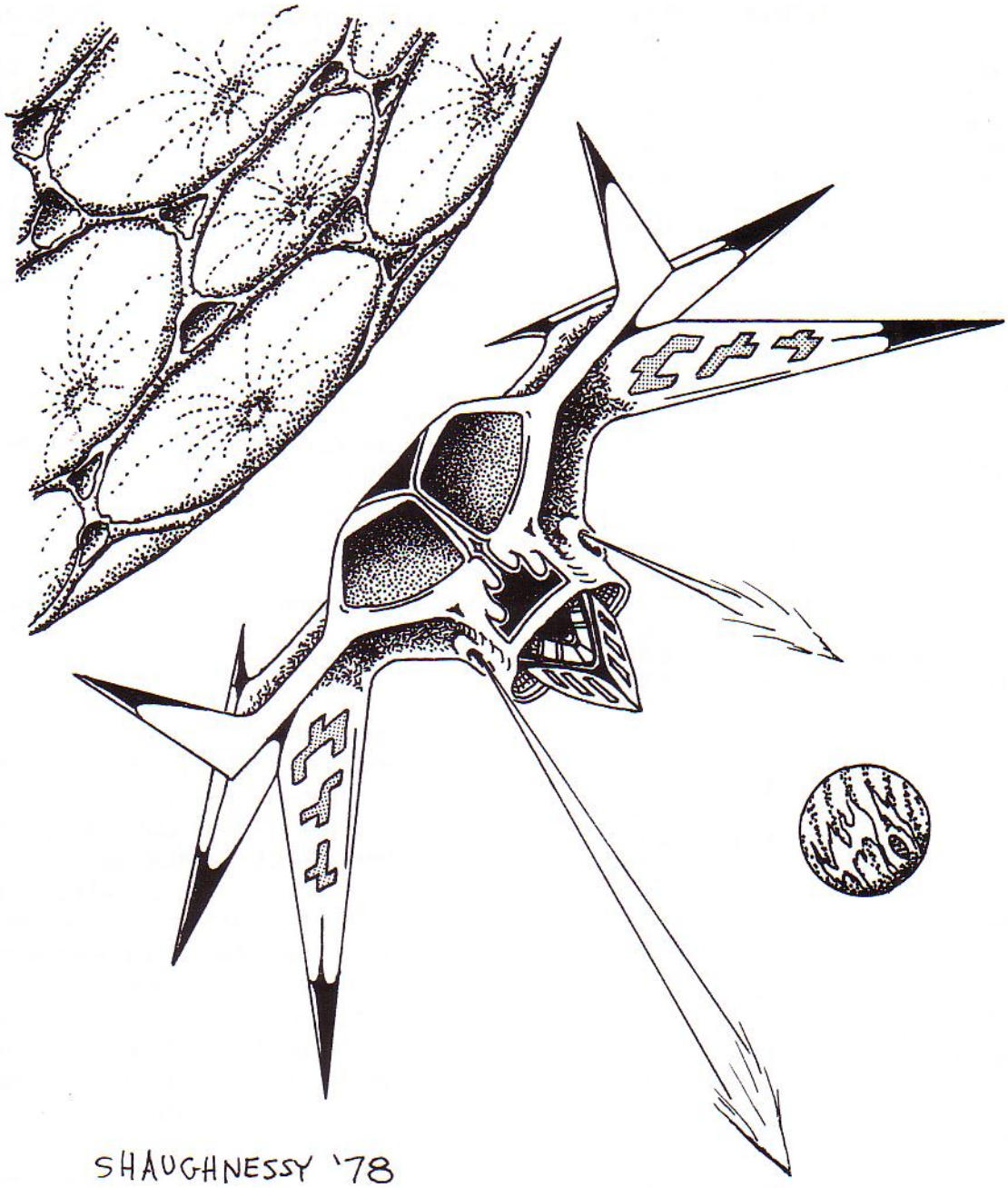
Space Tactical Games	% Resp.	Rate
WarpWar	69.4	7.14
Alpha Omega	17.1	6.88
Starforce	75.6	6.81
Battlefleet Mars	37.8	6.79
Invasion America	32.1	6.68
Starfleet Battle Manual	26.4	6.31
The Ythri	31.6	5.95
Quazar	8.3	5.25
Fomalhaut II	8.8	5.00
Alien Space	26.4	4.37

Space Role Games	% Resp.	Rate
Traveller	34.2	6.91
Star Faring	9.3	4.39

Anytime a game firm has feedback ratings in its own publication there will be a bias. This is as true of game ratings in **THE SPACE GAMER** as it is for game ratings in **STRATEGY & TACTICS**. Ratings of "captive" audiences reflect the preferences of that audience. Subscribers to a company publication like *that* firm's products more than the average gamer. They wouldn't be subscribers or readers if they hated a firm's product line.

For example, in the company ratings Metagaming rates a full point higher than all other companies. That says our customers like what Metagaming does a bunch. It simply can't be interpreted as saying Metagaming is better than the other highly rated companies on the list. It is more like a vote of confidence for a relatively small game firm that is growing rapidly with products that have caught a lot of gamer's fancy.

The annual ratings will continue in **THE SPACE GAMER**. Despite the bias of a captive audience they are valuable for us in planning. Letters with the feedback also indicate strong interest.



MATCHMAKER

by

Bob Workman

Jim Alexander could be anything he wanted. Anytime.

Company motto: *Fulfill your thrill. Be anything for five intense minutes. Enjoy the pain of not knowing you'll win in the end; which you will. Satisfaction guaranteed.*

London detonation: minus five minutes. His body — numb and bloody. Hands — cramped — like

claws. Must reset rocket gyro; divert warhead out to sea. Try to — SNAP! Done! Get out alive . . . (**Moonraker**, Pat. number 313007)

Fourth and goal from three. Six seconds to play in the game. Behind 14-10, the national championship rides on Alexander. He takes the snap, fakes to the fullback, to the halfback, bootlegs around end . . . CRACK! He's in! (**Touchdown**, Pat. number 111111)

Mmmm — the softest, loveliest — nnnnh — the sultriest, kinkiest woman moves beneath him in ecstasy. Unyielding to any other, she offers herself completely, victim of his charms. POP! (**Coital Conquest**, Pat. number 333333)

Jim started with nothing. Now he had everything, such wealth that his mere affluence was a trifle. All his 27 years he played life like any other game. Now, winning hand over fist, the take was too easy. He needed a new, more vital challenge.

Life was so different a couple years ago, not just for Jim but for the world. That was before he returned to haunt the Tree Frog Tavern. Good old Tree Frog. A bar with class. A place of distinction. A real dive.

He knew it by heart as his collegiate study hall. Inside by the door leaned his faithful ladylove. Dimmed from nightly use, she still had nice curves and glowed with color. Rock-Ola Selections was a beautiful juke-box.

And next to the bar stood his reliable companion. Always willing to take the brunt of Jim's frustrations or add to the merriment of his success, Matchmaker was still the best pinball machine in town.

Light letters, buzz bumpers. Hit flags, ring bells, and — the unique feature of this old acquaintance — control the matching numbers in a final contest with destiny. But, as with any game, defeat was inevitable in time. The sport lay in staying alive as long as possible.

Jim was a wizard with Matchmaker. If he didn't win on total score he could usually match in a last ditch effort. He left his magic at home for this visit, however. It would only be wasted at a wake. Tree Frog Tavern was closing.

All rustic relics: beer brand clocks, electronic amusements, even the wooden frog out front, would either be scrapped or sold to old customers.

That night, one old customer had a heart full of memories, a gut full of grog, and a pocket full of change. Jim Alexander bought both machines.

He cleaned them up and placed them side by side in his living room. He even let them share the same outlet after all these years apart across the bar.

Rock-Ola would be all right, but Matchmaker needed work. Sluggish. Worn rubber and burnt-out lights. Jim staggered off to bed. Maybe someday, he thought, when he got some money . . . sure.

The Machines were ecstatic. Rescued from rust and de-activation, the made fully-charged electronic love. Jim didn't hear the CLUNK of successive replays, didn't see the flashing lights or smell the ozones. Nine hours later he woke to the whirring sigh of a lovesick turntable.

Thinking he'd left Rock-Ola on all night, Jim cursed. He reached for the plug and stopped. Where'd the TV come from?

A futuristic video display unit nestled beneath Matchmaker's steely legs. He picked it up curiously. The Machines went haywire. Rock-Ola blared angrily. Matchmaker clanged and tilted. Jim yanked both their plugs. Ingrates.

He returned to the unit, finding instructions:

Be a ROCK STAR

1) Insert dollar bill
2) Press fingertips to Ten-Spots
3) Be totally absorbed as a holographic ROCK STAR!

Game lasts five minutes. Extended time for encore play.

Big deal. He yawned. Scrounging out a bill, he fed it to Rock Star and touched the ten physio-molecular transmutation micro-panels.

Slapdash! He fingered a chord. Thousands cheered in frenzied madness. His music was fresh, atomic rock. He strutted on stage. Pandemonium burst below.

No dream, no illusion, this was real. He could feel, think, act, react! He existed here. And he loved it.

Five minutes later he returned to the world, exhausted. But, Wow! Where was another buck? All afternoon he played to packed houses. Each event was unmatched. New music. New crowds. It was total experience lacking only in pain and disappointment.

Physically, his body discorporated, became a figure of light. Photoelectrically metamorphized, he was composed of photons rather than atoms. He existed for a five minute span as a living hologram, transported into the device via lasers. He was Jim Alexander — Rock Star!

Eventually, he played out his last dollar bill and stopped to think. How did all this come about? When he realized the likely source of Rock Star's origin, he plugged the Machines in and apologized. He wanted to play with their tot, that's all. Surely they understood his intentions.

What could they say?

Soon the little Machine was copied, patented, released in quantity throughout the world. People clamored to feed dollars, pounds, and francs to Jim's bank account. He hired a staff to develop variations. This grew into a company, then a corporation.

As Chairman of Grand Delusions, Inc., he produced numberless holographic fantasies: **Lemans, Musketeer, Surgeon General, Statesman, Heavyweight Champ, Amazon,** every clique had its favorite. Wall Streeters bought **Executive Decision.** The Japanese fought over **Samurai**. Endless variations of **Star Fleet** abounded.

A person's only limitation was their desire. ***Fulfill your thrill***. Grand Delusions gave wish fulfillment on an equal opportunity basis.

Yet here he stood: 27, wealthiest man alive, and looking for something more. He had won at all games, conquered all worlds known to man. There remained only one real challenge, the invitation of the unknown.

Before him gleamed the passage to his private ardor, the ultimate trip, **Time Warp**. Through it he could traverse any future time zone, any dimension, confront infinite situations that did not yet exist. But only for five minutes. Even his personal staff could not lengthen one's age.

9:30 p. m. He set an electronic timer for three minutes, then interfaced it between the machine and an outlet. When this pre-set time elapsed, the electric current would automatically disengage. He would pass into **Time Warp** and it would turn off. But, by then he would be ahead of the machine, ahead of time forever after.

He touched the Ten-Spots and disappeared.

At 9:33 p. m., Jim Alexander committed immortality.

THE WARLORD GAME

a review

by

David James Ritchie

THE WARLORD GAME is billed as both a more or less historical portrayal of the pursuit of power in medieval Europe, and a fantasy role-playing board game. As history of even the *flavor-of-the-era* variety, it is something of a bust; as a role-playing vehicle, it is tremendous. Despite unrealistic systems, unclear rules and incomplete explanations of simple game mechanics, **THE WARLORD GAME** manages to "muddle thru", if not to greatness, at least to potential cult status.

In concept, the game is quite simple. From 2 to 6 players begin the game with one knight and two light foot apiece. The knight counter represents the player. If the counter is eliminated, the player gets the ax as well (he may start over again). Each player randomly draws one of 33 fief cards which will tell him which fief he controls at the start of the game, and how much gold is currently in his treasury. Players then draw 8 more cards for "church fiefs", and set up a monastery in each church fief. Once the church is established and each player has deployed his forces inside his fief, play begins, continuing for 25 game-years (an average adult lifetime during the era, the designer opines) divided into 4 seasonal game-turns per year. As the game progresses, players may rise in status and wealth, get killed off (and magically reappear the next turn shorn of all previous gains, but otherwise healthy), or suffer a variety of odd effects tending to retard their rise to emperorhood.

The actual mechanics of this quest of power can get complicated. Each game-turn is divided into separate player-turns. During each player-turn, one player moves and conducts combat in sequence as per the old standard Avalon Hill formula. In fact, the movement and combat systems could practically have been lifted from **WATERLOO** with only minor changes. Even the game map looks like an AH product: a standard 22 x 28 mounted multi-color effect with superimposed hexagonal grid and *realistic* terrain. During Spring Turns, players also roll a die for *growth* (roll **1**, get a free walled town, etc.) and build castles, walled towns, bridges, roads, monasteries, et. al. Troops are raised in the Spring, too. During Winter Turns, players may not conduct combat, but do receive taxes and must roll a pair of dice to see what *FATE* has dished out to them this year (could be a free walled town from your friendly local Merchant's Guild or a Papel Decree sending you on a crusade with a one in six chance of getting mugged to death by infidels).

Where these relatively simple elements make for complications is in their explication. The designer seems to assume that his audience is composed entirely of experienced gamers, all of whom are not only familiar with Avalon Hill games, but are in agreement as to the interpretation of AH rules systems. For example, Zones of Control are mentioned, but never defined. In fact, we never do find out if zoc's are active or inactive or how they affect movement (we merely assume that they are active and rigid because such an assumption fits with the rest of the rules, but that conclusion is by no means universal).

The failure of the designer to properly explain terrain and its effects in the rules, as well as the uncommonly confusing map art, extends the complications into all phases of movement and combat. And, as if the confusion were not bad enough already, the game includes 200 hexagonal *terrain counters* which can be placed over the map terrain, altering it in various ways. The problem here is that these counters totally cover the hex making it impossible to see the original terrain. Are we to assume, therefore, that when someone pays to bridge a river he also destroys a forest? Or maybe when the loggers clear forest, they also level a mountain for free leaving only clear level terrain behind. The inadequacy of terrain rules and descriptions, alone, makes the game practically unplayable.

In all fairness, the failures of the designer in respect of simple explication are so obvious that players usually have the good sense to sit down and discuss the rules before playing. Once they have agreed on how to play the thing, they need somewhere to set it up where it can be left undisturbed during meals, sleep periods, births, deaths and bar mitzvahs. This is a *long* game (up to 100 turns). Those who persevere in solving these pre-game problems will probably end up as **TWG** cultists. The game's appeal, you see, is not a function of movement and combat mechanics. Rather, the game draws its strength from political and economic infrastructure in which all of this standard military activity takes place.

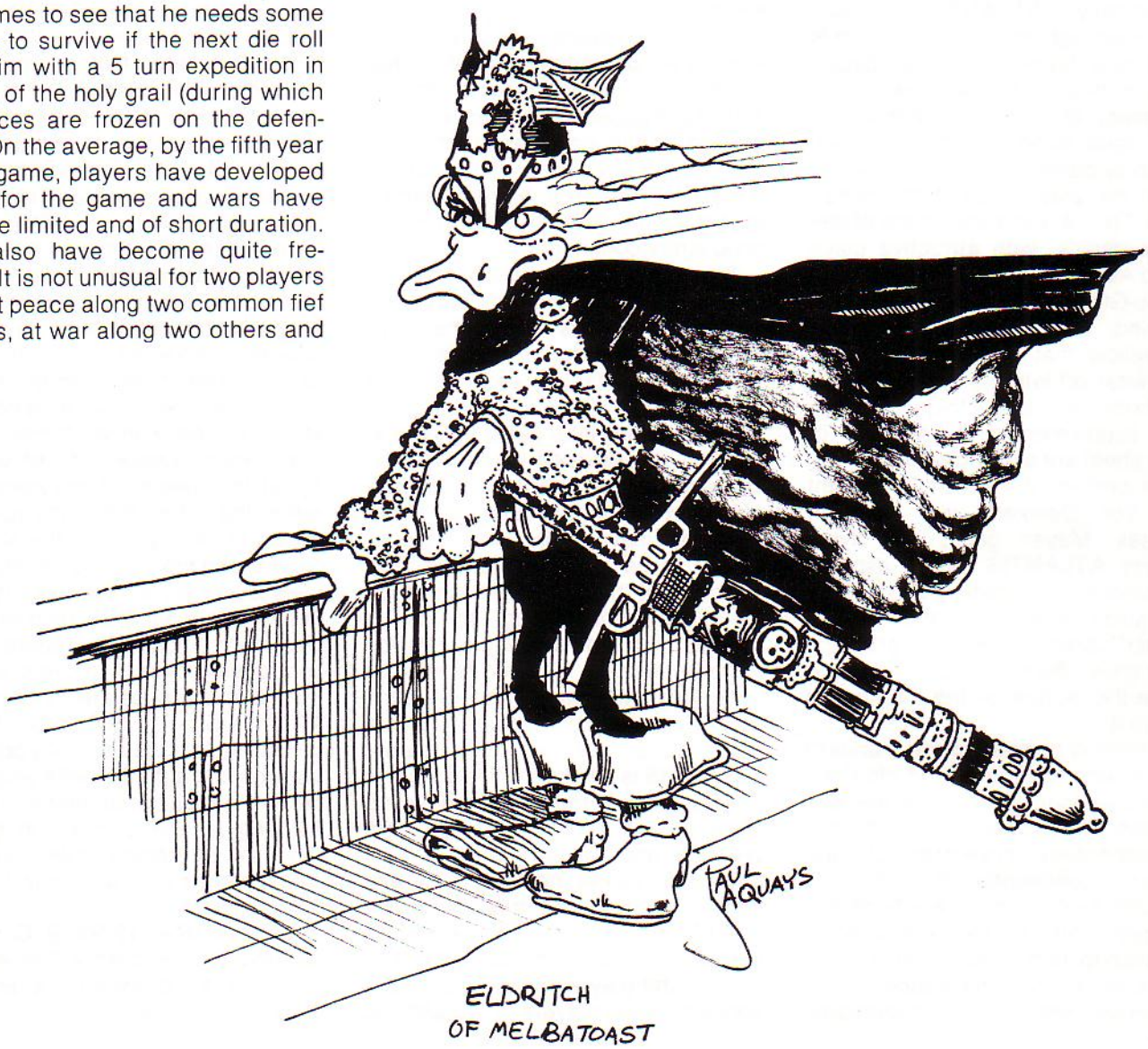
Each player is equipped with 100 unit counters representing various types of knights and retainers. Each Spring, players may purchase new units by expending gold from their treasuries. Gold is a convenient term for a variety of goods including cows, pigs, wheat, silver pieces and gold pieces (all represented by 200 multi-colored *money* counters of various denominations). Gold may also be used to make capital improvements in one's fiefs. The influx of all the treasure necessary to improving the fiefs and raising the army comes via taxation and conquest primarily. As unoccupied fiefs are conquered by a player, he receives their value in gold (marked on a fief card representing each fief). In addition to this initial loot from the fief, each conquest automatically adds a number of troops to the conqueror's army and expands his tax base. As he acquires more fiefs, the knight counter representing him is replaced with a duke counter, a

king and an emperor. A player may win by becoming a king and controlling 17 fiefs for 1 year or by becoming an emperor and controlling 18 fiefs for 9 months. Players may conquer other players' fiefs, unclaimed fiefs and church fiefs. Conquering a church fief, however, results in an immediate fine and may result in various and sundry bits of rotten luck since those who attack the church become knaves and must take an additional roll of the dice to see what *fate* has in store for them as a consequence. The other players also get to call such an individual a knave, which can be jollier than it sounds, especially after a few beers.

Given the frequent interjection of die rolls in the game for taxes, fate, growth and such, players soon become accustomed to the most outrageous poles of fortune. Eventually, even the most thick-headed aggressor comes to see that he needs some friends to survive if the next die roll nails him with a 5 turn expedition in search of the holy grail (during which his forces are frozen on the defensive). On the average, by the fifth year of the game, players have developed a feel for the game and wars have become limited and of short duration. They also have become quite frequent. It is not unusual for two players to be at peace along two common fief borders, at war along two others and allied against a third player where one of his fiefs joins theirs. At the same time, the other three players (the more the better in this game) may also be engaged in a plethora of similar alliances, truces and little wars.

The fact that agreements may be broken at the risk of becoming a knave and going to an unpleasant fate, makes for a realistic limit on the provisions and duration of agreements. The fact that there is no real limit as to the type of agreements into which players enter encourages a good deal of variety and complexity in such agreements. It is in this diplomatic element that the game really comes into its own. Past diplomatic games have tended to work on the theory that the simpler the game mechanics, the wider the latitude for diplomatic maneuver. **THE WARLORD GAME** tosses this theory into a cocked hat. In **TWG**, the scores of common borders between fiefs become the focus of a variety of different pacts, and the movement of troops, construction of military roads, bridges, etc. becomes a cause of additional negotiation. In short, because there are more mechanical elements in the game, there is more to agree upon and less running in circles. If players cannot reach an agreement regarding one border line, there is always the possibility of reaching agreement on another.

THE WARLORD GAME comes complete with map, 1,000 die-cut counters, charts, rules, 33 fief cards, dice and storage box. The quality of all components is roughly equal to an Avalon Hill game. **THE WARLORD GAME** is available for $14 from ROBERT WILLIAMS GAMES, Box 22592, Robbinsdale, MN 55422.



ELDRITCH
OF MELBATOAST

ATLANTIS 12,500 B. C.

by
TRACY HARMS

For those who can't decide between science fiction and fantasy, Excalibre Games has put future style weaponry into a mythological and ancient setting. **ATLANTIS — 12,500 B.C.** is a game based on the tales of ancient war between the peoples of Greece and Mu against Atlantis.

Physically, **ATLANTIS** is substantial enough for $3.49. The map is green and black on yellow paper, giving a nicely stylized view of the continents of 12,500, including the now "deep sixed" Atlantis and Mu. Terrain is purely cosmetic; it has no effect on play aside from ocean hexes. The 74 unit markers are of die-cut cardstock, with attractive black on red Atlantean pieces. The units for the Mu-Greek Alliance are a stomach churning, barbershop-stripe orange and yellow that is enough to make one swear off late night gaming. The "rulebook" is a single folded sheet. A rules supplement and an order of battle sheet are also included.

The setting of the war is straight from Von Daniken, with Peruvian airbases, Mayan gods, and flying saucers. **ATLANTIS**' "scifi" aspects are strictly low grade pulp variety. The worst offender is the "rocket bomber", both concept and graphics being sheer Buck Rodgers. You have to see the picture on the markers to believe it.

Infantry is handled in the standard fashion with the same tired old CRT. The transoceanic nature of the war requires transporting of ground units by anti-gravity hovercraft to the enemy's continent(s) for offensive assaults. Due to the scarcity of this transport, infantry has a frustrating limitation to its defensive function.

In contrast are the saucer units, possessed only by the Atlanteans. These gems can go virtually anywhere and deliver high firepower, making them the most powerful conventional units in the game, and the most fun. The saucers use laser weapons, as do ground "flak" batteries, and their attacks are resolved using a different method that discourages unit stacking. Added to the above weapons are Giants and Monsters of ancient myth that ponderously march against Atlantis, and the capper to the arsenals is Atlantis' "Ultimate Weapon" that can obliterate any hex of units per turn, a weapon so powerful that it threatens to disturb the planet's structure and flood entire continents.

The cataclysm, which has a chance of occurring any time the Ultimate Weapon is used, is the major element of game rationale. The deluge of Atlantis and Mu are assumed inevitable, and a roll must be made during later game turns as to whether the Weapon is used or not. This adds a good chance that a game will be ended before a winner is decided, an unavoidability that is too arbitrary to be an effective rule. The structure of the game is meant to be moralistic, proclaiming to be *a simulation of man's ability to destroy not only enemies, but also himself by tampering with nature and weapons beyond his control.* Not only is this a poor base for an SF game, **ATLANTIS** is a failure in realizing this concept. Since the players have no decision *not* to build the Ultimate Weapon, and *cannot* destroy it, they can hardly blame themselves for any consequences. In contrast, the game **GODSFIRE** provides for a similar catastrophe that is the sole responsibility of the player(s) involved, and in addition forces players to live with the results of near annihilation in continuing the game beyond the holocaust.

At this point, **ATLANTIS — 12,500 B. C.** sounds like a trite but playable game. Unfortunately, the rules are hardly more than a summary of basic ideas. Excalibre assumes you are aquainted enough with games in general that they can skimp on their rules. Rules which seem straightforward at first have significant ambiguities. Bombing requirements, loading and unloading for transport, CRT use and other mechanics are poorly phrased or sketchy, rules on defensive fire are totally inadequate, and the supplement adds to the amazing amount of redundancy found in these short rules.

This is not to say that **ATLANTIS** is unplayable. Some interpretation, often unconscious, on the part of the players will fill the gaps for many. However, there is no guarantee a new opponent will have interpreted **ATLANTIS** the same way.

The ultimate failing of an incomplete rules system is not in the basics of play, but in the nature of intense competition in wargaming. In actual warfare, outstanding commanders use unexpected maneuvers, secret weaponry, or "impossible" tricks that have often won a battle. In gaming, most of the possibilities for unorthodox practice are eliminated. (A real commander may have been able to arrange for his halftracks to sprint faster than normal, but no gamer will let you exceed your Movement Allowance.) If most of the rare, bizarre happenings of war are illegal, then one must find ways to win within the rules. Since the rules are known by both players, the ability to dissect and link the fine points of any rules becomes a high skill. It is for this reason rules often read like legal documents, hopefully clearing up all controversy over a move's validity. But, when the rules are as loose as in **ATLANTIS — 12,500 B. C.**, there is no way to convince an irate opponent that you can get away with your latest tactical rabbit-out-of-the-hat routine. As long as the ultimate in gaming requires stretching rules to their limits, games such as this will remain but diversions.

ATLANTIS — 12,500 B. C. may be ordered from Excalibre Games Inc., Box 29171, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429. Cost: $3.49.

War of the Ring

a review

by

Tony Zamparutti

WAR OF THE RING, in case you haven't guessed, is based on J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy, **The Lord of the Rings**. **WAR OF THE RINGS** is not only a fun game, but a fairly good re-creation of the events in **LOTR**. Though it is not very hard to play, it contains much detail. I seriously doubt if there is another game on **LOTR** that has a rule for a Nazgul's flying beast being killed. The artwork in the game is by Tim Kirk, who did a very good job illustrating.

The components in **WAR OF THE RING** are of SPI's usual high quality. The mapboard comes in two pieces which fit together to make a 33" x 34" play area. The map itself is very detailed, with many different types of terrain: mountains, roads, forests, rivers, swamps, towns, citadels, and tunnels. While a hex grid is used for movement, the map is also subdivided into areas which are used for searches and other purposes. The playing pieces come in a variety of colors: red on black for Sauron, white on red for Saruman, and various whites, greens, blues, and yellows for the Fellowship player. There are 400 counters for various characters and armies. The army units have two factors on them, combat and movement. The units can range between very powerful Haradrim units of the Dark Power player to an army of woodsmen from Mirkwood, who are respectively a 50-7 and a 1-5. (In case you're wondering, Tolkien mentions woodsmen on p. 91 of **The Fellowship of the Ring**.) The character pieces also have two factors on them, morale rating and movement. Fellowship characters are placed on the mapboard upside down, and remain so until the Dark Power player finds them. Dark Power character counters are always face up.

The components that set **WAR OF THE RING** apart from other games are the 112 player cards. There are four types of player cards: character cards, magic cards, event cards, and search cards.

Each character in the game has a card which contains their main attibutes. All of the important characters in the trilogy have a card, including the Fellowship, Theoden, Saruman, Galadriel, and so on. The attributes listed on the character cards are: combat ability, morale, endurance, ring rating (how easily the character can remove the ring once it has been put on), a capture and escape rating (the chance the character has of being captured by a force of orcs, or escaping once captured), and for some, a sorcery. There are also character cards for Shelob, the Balrog, and two other monsters. Comparing the character cards can be a fun part of the game (yes, Aragorn could have taken on the Balrog), although some of the ratings will not be accepted by everyone. For instance, Frodo with a magic sword has an even chance against a Nazgul, who are not the greatest of characters.

Magic cards each contain one magical item listed on them, along with a description of the effect of the magical item. The items include Elven swords, such as Anduril, and other items such as Elven rope, or Galadriel's light. These cards are placed randomly in boxes which represent various places on the map such as Rivendell, Lothlorien, or Edoras. Whenever a Fellowship player enters a hex containing magical items, he can pick them up.

Of all the cards in the game, event cards are the most important. Each player picks an event card at the beginning of each turn, and he can play it at any time during the game. Every card has one even listed on it, such as **Fierce Storm**, or **Boromir attempts to seize Ring**, along with the effects of the card printed below. The cards affect the course of the play immensely, and add uncertainty to whatever is occurring.

The final type of cards are used only by the Dark Power player, and also by the Saruman player in the three-player game. Search cards are picked at the beginning of each turn, and each card lists several areas that are being searched, along with what is doing the searching, orcs or Nazgul. If there are any Fellowship characters in those areas, the Dark Power can attempt to search for them, and maybe he will be able to capture the characters.

There is another innovation in **WAR OF THE RING** very important to play — *Shadow Points*. To do almost anything — move units, search for Fellowship characters, or have armies attack — the Dark Power player must expend *shadow points*. He is allocated a random amount each turn, depending on the role of a die, and cannot save these points from turn to turn. A bad roll on an important turn can wreck the Dark Power player's plans, and maybe even his chance of winning.

WAR OF THE RING can be played in any of three games: the **Character Game**, the **Campaign Game**, and the **Three-Player Game.** The **Character Game** is played between two sides, the Fellowship player and the Dark Power player. It generally takes an hour or two to play, and uses only the nine characters in the Fellowship, the Nazgul, Saruman, the Mouth of Sauron, and a few other units, such as search bands of orcs. No armies are used, but battles are fought abstractly. The **Character Game** is called **CITADEL DESTRUCTION**, and involves the Dark Power player attempting to capture the citadels of Minas Tirith, Helm's Deep, and Dol Amroth. The game centers on the Fellowship, and their attempt to evade the Nazgul and get the ring to Orodruin.

The **Campaign Game** is more complex, and brings in armies and army combat. In units, the Dark Power player has an incredible advantage in strength over the Fellowship player. However, units in citadels are tripled in defense, so sieges require a lot of attacking forces. These sieges can become long and bloody, especially for the attacker. The combat table uses basic odds, like 1-1, 2-1, and so on, and the losses are in percentages of the total forces. The morale strength of leaders can influence the die roll by adding or subtracting to it, as can magic. Leaders are usually more important to the outcome of a battle than are the odds; the combat table is virtually the same at 1-2 as it is at 2-1.

Army units have restrictions on movement. Basically, they cannot be moved unless they have been mobilized. To be mobilized, they generally have to be attacked, or have their country attacked. For mobilization, armies are divided into several sections. The Fellowship player has his army divided into three parts: the army of Rohan, the army of Gondor, and the armies of the Elves, Dwarves, and Western allies. The last category is basically all the Fellowship armies other than Rohans or Gondor. The Dark Power player's armies are divided into two parts, that of Sauron, and Saruman.

The military part of the **Campaign Game** is usually fun, but often ends in a stalemate unless one side gets the jump on another by mobilizing from special event cards, Thus, it is the character part of the game which usually determines the victor, although the armies effect the outcome a great deal. Also, the event cards often add an element of luck which limits skill. Although SPI did add this luck factor, the idea is still very good, and it keeps play tense. Also, playing the event cards skillfully will greatly help a player.

One of the best parts of **Campaign Game** is the interaction between grand strategy and armies on one hand, and individual characters and combat on the other. This is also true for the **Three-Player Game**, which merely makes Saruman into the third player. He is, however, slightly strengthened. Unfortunately for the Saruman player, Saruman has little chance of winning. The game is still fun (especially for the other players).

Although it is not without its faults, **WAR OF THE RING** is a very good game of Tolkien's trilogy, and probably, the best one on the market. The detailed map of Middle-Earth and analysis of the characters and magical items is worth a large part of the purchasing price. The game is fun, exciting, and does not take too long to play. I urge all Tolkien fans to get it.

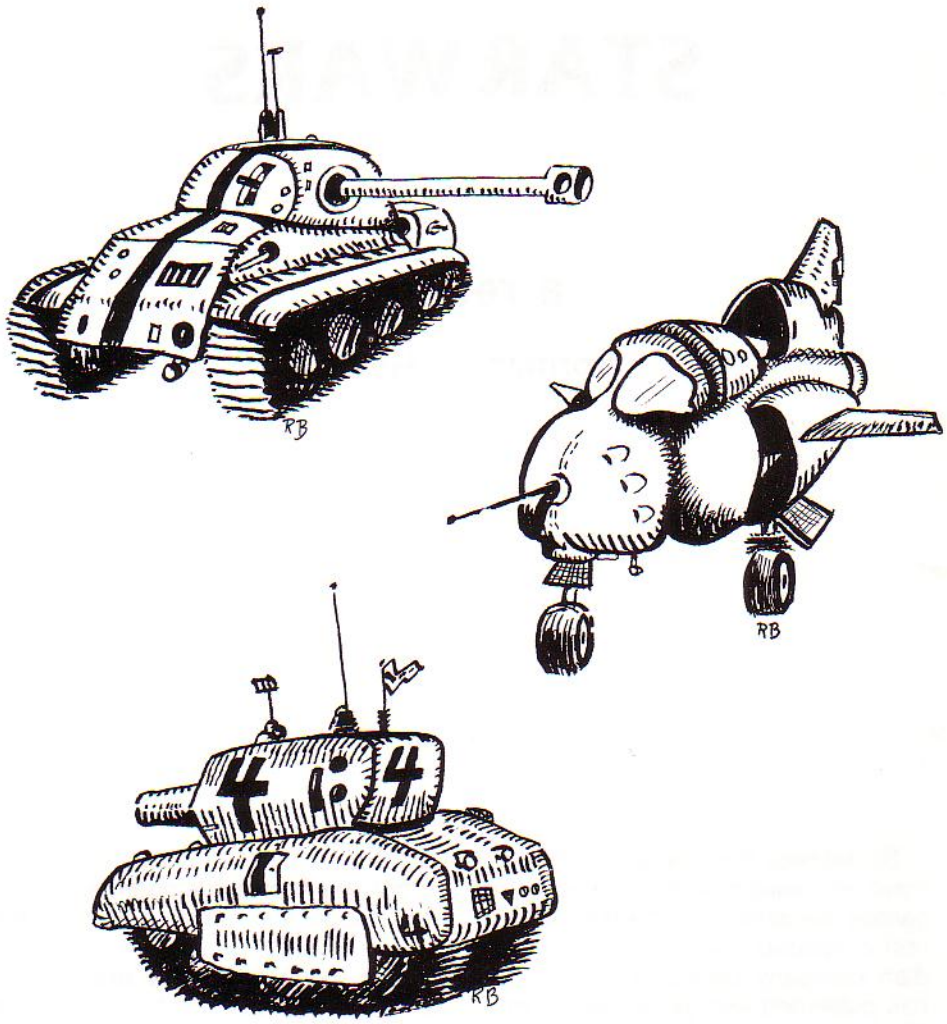
WAR OF THE RING is available from: SPI, 44 East 23rd. Street, New York, NY 10010. It costs $15 for the basic version, $18 for the boxed version with a mounted map, and $20 for the basic version plus two separate games. Each of the separate games is based on a battle from Middle-Earth, one on the Seige of Minas Tirith, entitled **GONDOR**, and the other on a battle from the Second Age, entitled **SAURON**. The $20 version is titled **MIDDLE EARTH**.

INVASION: AMERICA

a review

by

Tony Van Lien



For those of us who are into holocaust, **INVASION: AMERICA**, by Simulations Publications Inc. is the game we've been waiting for. Postulating a world at the end of this century where ABM technology and national self-interest have managed to eliminate the much vaunted nuclear deterrent force as a viable entity, the game simulates a foreign invasion of the North American continent by the three other major powers of the time: the European Socialist Coalition (Russian dominated), the Pan Asiatic League (Chinese dominated), and the South American Union (Heaven-knows-who came out on top).

I:A uses a system of untried units wherein all the pieces are deployed face-down with an untried strength showing. When a unit is involved in combat for the first time, it is flipped over to show its true strength. Some units are actually stronger than shown on their untried side while some units are weaker. Some show up with no strength at all and are immediately eliminated. It's a simple and very playable system that adds greatly to the feel of the *fog of war* in the game (that untried unit occupying the cornerstone of your line may turn out to be a powerhouse or it could be a creampuff — what to do? What to do?).

Special units include speedy Hovercraft detachments and powerful (with no untried side) Chinese *wave assault* infantry. Rail units are used to carry combat units around the continent rather than an abstract method of strategic movement. Finally, the U. S. player has numerous, but weak, militia units.

The game revolves around control of city and resource (oil well and refinery) hexes. Not only are victory points assigned to each type of city and resource hex, but the potentially telling U. S. replacement rate is directly connected to the number of city hexes controlled. The Socialist allies must win quickly, but the immense size of the continent works against them (the distance from New York to San Francisco is approximately twice that from Berlin to Moscow). Combat depends upon a player gaining air superiority over a given sector — without it you can't attack.

The game was built for simplicity. The transport-type units basically carry only one unit at a time. A simple odds/ratio CRT and the absence of the usual plethora of charts that comprise at least half of most SPI games are just a few of the factors that lend to this easy, smoothly playing game. **I:A** has appeal for experienced gamers as well as newcomers. It's a truly great game.

The only real defects in the game are its lack of a provision for an invasion of Alaska across the Bering Straits (an operation that's a personal favorite), and possibly, its size. **I:A** uses two 24" x 36" heavy paper, full color mapsheets (a total size of nearly 4' x 3' covering the area from Baffin Island to Venezuela) and 400 counters depicting the forces of five nations. A game of this format could scare many new gamers.

INVASION: AMERICA was designed by James Dunnigan and J. A. Nelson with superb graphics by Redmond Simonsen. It can be purchased from Simulations Publications Inc., 44 East 23rd. St., New York, N.Y. 10010 for $12.

U. F. O. & STARWARS

a review

by

Norman S. Howe

Sometimes the search for the ultimate in realism and complexity in games becomes frustrating, and a rest is needed. Gamma Two, a Canadian company based in Vancouver, has published two games which provide attractive havens for the weary SF gamer. Both games are based on chance rather than determinism, but still provide challenge enough for even the most competitive player.

The background of **UFO** is drawn from the television series of the same name. In the near future, Earthmen are defending their homeworld against invasion by flying saucers. The aliens must be stopped in space, as their spaceships are very difficult to find once they have landed, and the *Authorities* do not wish to *Alarm The Populace*.

UFO is played on a circular game board divided into 7 circular "orbits". Each orbit is 12 spaces around. Each player starts the game with 8 wooden spaceship counters; the Terran player on Earth (below the lowest orbit), the Alien in the outermost orbit. The Moon also plays a part in the game, orbiting on the 4th track.

The game system is drawn from **BACKGAMMON**: each player rolls a pair of dice and moves 2 spaceships according to the die rolls. Ships orbit the Earth in a clockwise direction, and may change orbit by moving up and down on the 4 numbered spaces on each orbit track. Players destroy opposing ships by overtaking them in orbit and landing on them. Players cannot move pieces through enemy ships. When the Alien player rolls doubles, he *must* make a Hyperjump, moving one spaceship to any unoccupied orbit space on the board. If the Terran player rolls doubles, the Moon is moved 3 spaces clockwise, obliterating any ships in its path. One ship at a time may land on the Moon from orbit, and move with the Moon. The Alien player wins the game if he lands 4 ships on Earth, or 3 on Earth and one on the Moon. The Terran player wins by destroying 4 UFOs.

The box for **STARWARS** bears a cautionary note; there is no legal connection between the game and the movie **Star Wars**. The same applies to **UFO**, but as the word is effectively public domain, the company did not experience difficulties with it. **STARWARS** is an abstract interstellar war game, containing playing systems similar to **BACKGAMMON** (again) and **RISK**. The inhabitants of Sol and Vega attempt to capture each other's home systems.

The game board contains 6 star systems, those of Sol, Mira, Deneb, Rigel, Pollux, and Vega. Each system consists of a circular orbit of 12 spaces. Some spaces are blank; others contain Planets, Black Holes, Novae, and Hyperjump symbols. Movement and combat are similar to **UFO**; movement by die roll, clockwise orbiting and combat by displacement, but enemy ships may pass over each other. Ships may land on Planets, but may not end a move in a space containing a Black Hole or Nova. On landing on a Hyperjump space, players must move their ship to an open space in any adjacent star system.

Each player starts the game with 7 spaceships, but may build more. A deck of 21 planet cards is provided, depicting 7 different Aliens, 7 Ship types, and 7 Weapons. Whenever a player lands a starship on a Planet (excepting planets in home systems), he draws a card. When a player has acquired 3 cards of a kind or 1 each of 3 different kinds, he may trade them in to build a spaceship on one of the worlds of his home system.

A player wins the game by controlling his opponent's home system, i.e. there is at least one enemy ship in the system, and there are no friendly ships.

UFO and **STARWARS** are both games which can be played with little expenditure of thought. They are attractively packaged and illustrated, and are made of sturdy materials. These are the ideal games to play when you are too dazed to continue with **WAR IN THE PACIFIC**, or can't bear the sound of the pencils in **STELLAR CONQUEST**. Both sell for about $10 in Canada, more in the U. S.

LETTERS

I have never encountered a poorer excuse for a magazine than your **SPACE GAMER**. Not so much the material, but the lax attitude with regard to the promptness of publication.

I received the Sept.-Oct. issue (#13) in early December. It is now early February, (about the time I should be expecting the Jan.-Feb. issue in a couple of weeks) and I still have not received the Nov.-Dec. issue.

I can over look the lateness once, but not twice, and apparently the Jan.-Feb. issue will be late as well, since most magazines have their March issues out by now.

For me, this lateness spoils the pleasure the magazine should bring; because I begin to get frustrated, wondering if I've been forgotten entirely.

I have bought all your **Micro Games** plus **STELLAR CONQUEST** and I just recently ordered **GODSFIRE**. I would think this would make me a valued customer; but if you don't care, there is no point for me to continue buying your magazine or your games.

Unless you do something about this problem, I'll just have to stop buying games, and when the time comes, fail to renew the subscription. I would also advise my friends against doing any business with you.

I might add, that not answering me is as good as telling me to go jump in the lake. If you have an excuse, I am willing to hear it; but only to a certain point. The problem must be corrected, not just explained.

Brian Marrs
Phoenix, AZ

Dear Mr. Marrs:

Your complaint on "lateness" is perfectly valid. There is no excuse for it and it gauls us to be in this position. We hope to catch-up on TSG by the summer.

I am passing your letter to Ben for publication of most parts in TSG #16. Complaints are valid and well expressed complaints such as yours serve to spur us to deliver as expected.

Howard Thompson
Publisher

I greatly enjoyed the first issue I got of your 'zine (Number 13). As to whether (Lynn Willis' review of **SPACE MARINES**) the term 'Chiton' for Bug/Klackon armour is incorrect or not: 'Chiton' also refers to the calcium-rich armour plating of molluscs, etc., and is easy to mistake for 'Chitin,' the horny coating of insects and arachnids, etc. It's not that hard to confuse them. Further, it might be argued that the other-planetary species may be using the heavy mollusc-like plating (Their exoskeletons have to support more weight than little insects and spiders on Earth do), but then they'd probably be harder to penetrate. At any rate, it is not a hard confusion to make.

My problem with the SM aliens is that they are too conventional — I mean, would other planets have exact duplicates of Terran bears, birds, reptiles, for intelligent species to evolve from? (They might have analogues, or similar creatures filling the same ecologic niches, but NOT THE SAME ORDERS.) Then there is the business about reptiles and crabs developing intelligent civilizations. I don't buy it, especially for the Bugs/Klackons/Hiss. You have to have, in addition to tool-using capacity, a certain high degree of metabolism, a rich oxygen supply to the brain, and neither reptiles nor arthropods have it. Sorry, but I feel the same way about **Hymenoptera**. They must be pseudo-insectoids with a quite different internal metabolism and hence could NOT be 'Hymenoptera' in scientific classification. Reptiles are especially hard to believe — although if you believe what Prof. Bakker and others are saying about **Dinosauria**, then it's quite likely that an intelligent species might have evolved from one of the small hunting 'bird-mimic' dinosaur species (Bakker believes dinosaurs were warm-blooded). They have binocular vision and grasping hands, and large brains in relation to body weight.

Still, that does not detract from the playability or enjoyability of the games, although for **SM** it suggests some weird tactics, such as attacking the Hiss during the night when they are sluggish and dormant, or giving extra damage when a Hiss is hit by a heat weapon (the main problem 'cold blooded' animals have is getting rid of excess heat in sunlight. Sure, they bask in the sun, but they also move back and forth between sun and shadow, and change alignment of body to the sun. A croc staked in the sun dies of heat prostration.)

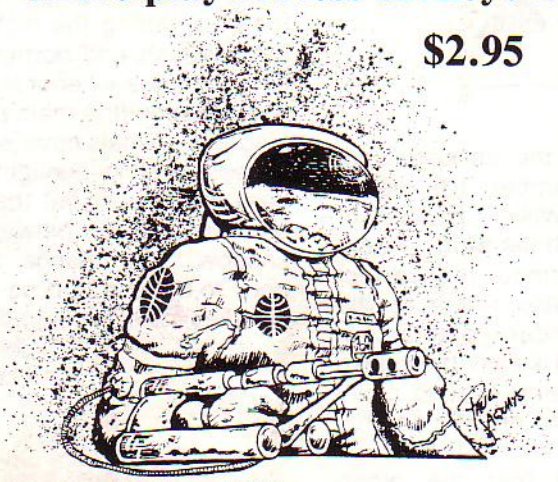
John P. Strang
Long Beach, CA

The Fine Folks at Metagaming will be heartened to learn that I have been giving long and serious thought to a recent development in the pages of your chief competitor, TSR's **THE DRAGON**: namely, their new game-in-every-issue practice. As an answer to **SNIT SMASHING, SNIT'S REVENGE, SNIT MENOPAUSE,** and the host of sequels undoubtedly waiting in the wings, I have designed a game of my own, to be offered in the pages of your first larger-sized issue of **THE SPACE GAMER**. It's called **CHICKEN OF THE SEA**, and deals with an enormous school of tuna and their attempts to avoid capture by frantic, maddened mermaids armed with nuclear-powered tridents. Its movement system is adaptable to any **WOODEN SHIPS & IRON MEN** board, and in a unique combat resolution system players throw kelp instead of dice. By escaping the canning factory during the game, the Tuna Player gains experience and rises through the ranks, which, however, are indistinguishable from one another. Later scenarios would add armored squid and sea lion infantry, pollution, forgotten World War II floating mines, and Jacques Cousteau. How much will you pay me?

Allen Varney
Reno, NV

SCIENCE FICTION GAMES

MicroGames are small, fast-playing, and inexpensive. But not trivial. A MicroGame is a complete science-fiction wargame...one you can put in your pocket and play at lunch. *More* play for *less* money? Try a MicroGame and see.



Designed by Lynn Willis
Illustrated by Paul Jaquays

$2.95

OLYMPICA

The U.N. Raid On Mars, 2206 A.D.

OLYMPICA is a challenging tactical game of combat on and below the dusty surface of Mars. The attacking U.N. force — infantrymen whose hand weapons reach six miles, laser tanks, and rocket lifters — must take on strongpoints and infantry united by the religion/machine/telepathic oversoul that controls Mars . . . the WebMind.

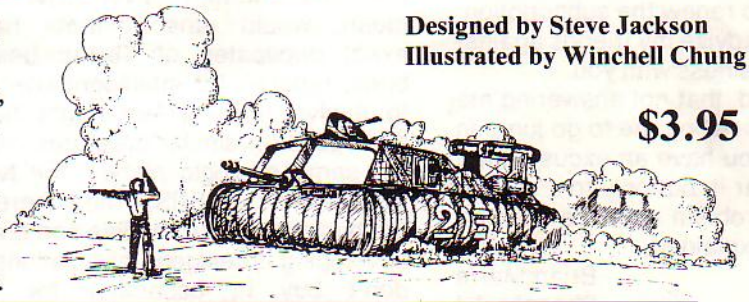
OLYMPICA includes a 24-page rule booklet with color cover, 8¼" x 14" game map, and counter set. The price is $2.95, or $2.50 to subscribers to *The Space Gamer.*

G.E.V. *more battles from the world of* OGRE

G.E.V., sequel to the popular **OGRE**, adds more detail to this fast-moving simulation of armored combat in the next century. **G.E.V.** is a new game — but is wholly compatible with **OGRE.**

Stacking and terrain rules, new unit types, the Mark IV Ogre, and more . . . Scenarios include Raid, Breakthrough, Ceasefire Collapse, and The Train. And within hours, you'll be inventing your own.

G.E.V. includes a 24-page rulebook, counter set, and three-color 12" x 14" game map. The price is $3.95 — $3.50 to *TSG* subscribers.



Designed by Steve Jackson
Illustrated by Winchell Chung

$3.95

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OGRE pits humans against the giant cybernetic tanks of 2085. CHITIN I shows the Harvest Wars of intelligent insects. WARP-WAR lets players design their own ships for interstellar combat. RIVETS recreates what happened when all the humans died – but the idiot robots kept fighting... MELEE, WIZARD, and DEATH TEST are all parts of THE FANTASY TRIP, a role-playing system. MELEE covers gladiatorial combat, and WIZARD pits magicians against one another; DEATH TEST uses the MELEE rules (not supplied) to take one to five players through a "programmed" adventure. Each of these games is $2.95 ($2.50 for subscribers to *The Space Gamer)*, except the larger WIZARD, which is $3.95 ($3.50 to *TSG* subscribers). Subscriptions to *The Space Gamer*, Metagaming's magazine for science-fiction and fantasy gamers, are $8 for six bimonthly issues, $15 for twelve.

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